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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURE IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

BY

Mary Catherine Wagner

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1986

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Mary Wagner
4325 - 147 A Street
Edmonton Alberta
T6H 5T4

DATE: October 10, 1986

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Student Perceptions of Culture in Second Language Learning submitted by Mary Catherine Wagner in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

Douglas V. Parker
(Supervisor)

C. Chamberlin

J. Fossey

DATE: October 9, 1986

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of culture as a component of their second language learning experience. The following areas of concern were addressed: 1) the linguistic and educational background of students in the Extended French program; 2) topics and questions selected by students as being relevant to an understanding of the way of life in Quebec and Alberta; 3) strategies used by students to complete culture-related tasks; 4) students' perceptions of the relevance of culture study in the second language class; 5) students' interests and preferred activities in culture study; 6) students' perceptions of cultural competence; and 7) students' reflections on the meaning of culture.

A written questionnaire, two open-ended written tasks, and oral interview questions constituted the instrumentation. These were designed by the researcher and tested in a pilot study. A total of 40 Grade Six and Grade Nine students selected from four Edmonton Public School Board Extended French classes completed the questionnaire and the written tasks, and a sub-sample of eight students completed audio-taped interviews. Questionnaire data were analyzed through the use of relative frequencies. The students' written tasks were analyzed with reference to a composite list of topics and questions, and relevant data were presented in tables and discussed. Analysis of the interview data was directed towards identifying common themes which surfaced repeatedly in the interviews and towards interpreting these themes in the light of the problem.

Major conclusions of the study include:

1. A majority of Extended French students come from an Anglophone home environment, have had no personal experience with a Francophone milieu, but intend to continue their French studies.

2. Most students perceive topics and questions which relate directly to their own everyday lives as being most relevant to an understanding of the way of life in Alberta and Quebec. Their knowledge of similarities and differences between the two areas, however, is extremely limited.

3. Students rely on guess-work and personal interests and experience to help them complete culture-related tasks rather than employing a conscious strategy. Most do not feel they transfer skills or content learned in Social Studies to complete such tasks.

4. Most students perceive learning about the way of life of Francophones as less important than learning French per se. Grade Six students tend to see language in isolation from culture, whereas Grade Nine students are more likely to regard the two as interdependent.

5. Students' perceptions of cultural competence are unsophisticated and tend to reflect their isolation from a Francophone milieu and their lack of understanding of differences and similarities between Francophone culture and their own.

6. Most students have acquired a basic familiarity with the notion of culture as customs or behavior of those who are different from themselves, but do not see themselves as participants in a culture. They lack the personal experience of "strangerness" that might lead them to an understanding of their own culture and the role it plays in the determination of thought and action.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### Background to the Study

During the past two decades, much important language learning and teaching research has focused on the significance of learner factors in language learning. In particular, the relationship between the learner's interests, motivation, and attitudes and his achievement in language learning has been the subject of so many research investigations that the statement that student interests can be a useful starting point in the building of a successful language program has been accepted as axiomatic (Nostrand, 1974). Robinson (1981), in her investigation of language aptitude, found that foreign language election in Grade 8 depended on interest more than on any other variable. She also found that "interest" was more related to actual success than was potential ability as measured by the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery. Research also suggests that students are primarily interested in being able to communicate effectively with speakers of the second language, and that this emphasis on communicative ability or language-in-use requires some knowledge and understanding of the cultural or social context of the language. In her study investigating attitudes towards second language study, Myers (1980) found that respondents overwhelmingly named culture study as one of the most needed and liked aspects of the second language classroom experience.

The principal emphases of the Alberta core curriculum for FSL (French-as-a-second-language) programs provide a striking parallel to these trends in second language learning and teaching research. Programs are to be student-centered, with a focus on the development of communication skills and cultural sensitivity (embracing notions of awareness, appreciation, and positive attitudes), as well as the encouragement of personal development. Thus, the rationale for culture study is placed in the context of the reality of

"growing global interdependence" and the need for a curriculum which "will help Alberta's students to develop the minimum basic skills necessary to communicate with others who use French, the better to prepare them to take their place in our national and international communities" (Nine-Year French Program Curriculum Guide, 1980, p.2).

At the same time, it is evident from the literature on second language teaching and learning that one of the primary concerns facing second language teachers and program developers is the problem of attracting students to second language study, and once there, convincing them to continue. This issue is particularly acute in provinces such as Alberta, where second language study requirements are determined at the level of individual school boards and where programs are still primarily offered on an optional basis. A high attrition rate between elementary and high school enrollment levels has been noted throughout North America and attests largely to the profession's failure to "deliver" and perhaps to a certain dissatisfaction among students with their language learning experiences. If student interests regarding culture study as indicated by research match the stated goals of the Alberta curriculum, we must then ask what it is that students are actually experiencing at the classroom level. Is there a gap between theory and practice?

The literature on culture study as a component of language learning indicates that many students are not adequately exposed to learning about culture (Chastain, 1976; Tardif, 1978; Ullmann, 1982) and experience language learning as repetition of grammar drills and rote learning of vocabulary, divorced from functional use or cultural message (Myers, 1980), with the result that in practice some form of linguistic competence is supplanting the ideal of communicative competence. Our students often may learn a "hollow" form of language, a code, which they can see no purpose in acquiring (Robinson, 1981). Myers (1980) warns that "Students who remember only doing grammar drills do not continue language study any longer than required" (p. 46).

What exactly do we hope to achieve by teaching culture? Why is it included as one of the stated goals of language instruction? In spite of the qualified success of French immersion programs in Canada, the majority of students at the secondary level will continue to learn French in a core program (Stern, 1982). Although these students may never achieve the same level of linguistic competence as their peers in immersion, according to the dominant perspective in second language pedagogy they should, nevertheless, develop an awareness of and appreciation for the way of life of people whose language they are studying (Wilkes, 1979). Without this, the communicative skills they acquire will mean very little (Hill, 1979). Rivers (1976) has argued that if students cannot experience for themselves the opportunity that language study provides to break through monolingual and monocultural barriers, they will drop out as soon as they can. However, "cultural awareness" in itself may be an impossible goal without direct, systematic instruction in culture.

## Statement of the Problem

There may be a mismatch between the notion of culture as put forth in the literature and in many curriculum guides and the notion of culture that second language students are developing. Do we expect them to learn "cultural understanding, appreciation, awareness" automatically, simply by virtue of their presence in a language class? Are these vague ideals to which the profession willingly pays lip-service, but which it cannot or chooses not to fulfill? Thus, the question becomes: Can students tell us what they know about culture? Can their perceptions of the nature of or dimensions of culture as it relates to second language learning help us to explore a possible mismatch between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-in-use? Can their perceptions help us to modify the curriculum-as-plan or redirect our thinking towards better ways of

implementing culture study in our second language classrooms in such a way as to persuade more students to continue their second language learning?

## Purpose of the Study

Upper elementary and junior high school teachers of the Edmonton Public School Board Extended French program use the Nine-Year French Program Curriculum Guide as a basis for their second language programs. Therefore, one could assume that Extended French students who have finished Grade Six (the upper grade of Division II) and Grade Nine (the upper grade of junior high school) are able to demonstrate some understanding of the notion of culture and that the completeness or degree of their understanding would vary between the two grade levels depending in part upon the minimum expectations for cultural understanding, the major cultural themes for each grade level, and the course outline as indicated in the Nine-Year French Program Curriculum Guide.

The purpose of the study is to assess in what sense upper elementary and junior high school students enrolled in Extended French programs in selected Edmonton schools perceive "culture" as a component of their second language learning experience. By comparing their opinions about their experience with their approach to culture-related tasks, it may be possible to generate questions about the way in which culture study has been conceptualized within second language pedagogy.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. to explore one aspect of cultural understanding, that is, the extent to which students enrolled in Extended French classes at the Grade Six and Grade Nine levels have gained the necessary knowledge and experience to enable them to articulate some of the particulars of the culture of French speakers, the people whose language they are learning, and to compare this culture with their own;

2. to explore the extent to which these same students are able to establish general categories that reflect an understanding of the nature of culture itself as "way of life".

## Sub-problems

In addition to the general problem areas outlined above, answers will be sought to a number of related questions. These include:

1. What strategies do students use to complete culture-related tasks?
2. What is the perceived relevance of learning about culture in the second language class?
3. What would students identify as topics of interest and preferred activities in culture study?
4. What are students' perceptions of cultural competence (knowledge, behavioral, and affective dimensions), i.e., what do students think they should learn about a culture in order to understand and communicate with people in that culture?
5. How would students describe what it means "to be in a culture"? Are these students "culturally aware"? That is, does "culture" have any personal relevance for them, or is it something that "other" people have? Have they developed a sense of knowing how to be a "foreigner" (Stern, 1983)?

## Need for the Study

For more than a decade, cultural understanding and effective communication have constituted two of the central long-range goals of the Alberta curriculum for French as a Second Language (The French Curriculum Guide, 1974; Nine-Year French Program Curriculum Guide, 1980). It has become increasingly apparent that in order to communicate effectively with a native speaker, students must acquire not only linguistic skills but also a knowledge of "when to speak, when not, and ... what to talk about with

whom, when, where, in what manner" (Hymes, 1972, p. 277). The currently much-touted goal of "communicative competence", then, must include cultural dimensions such as the development of an awareness of and sensitivity toward the values, traditions, and way of life of the people whose language is being studied and the ability to function in a culturally authentic manner. The assumption or rationale for this perspective on learning French is stated as follows:

> In learning French, one gains a new awareness and a greater understanding of culture through the realization that there are similarities and differences between French and English-speaking peoples. Awareness that the patterns of living of each group are based on one's environment and experiences will, it is expected, lead to greater openmindedness, flexibility and readiness to understand and accept others as they are (Nine-Year French Program Curriculum Guide, 1980, p. 1).

This view of the purpose of language study is echoed in literature on the importance of culture study as a component of Social Studies:

> Exposing children to other cultures as early as possible in school is an important and most effective way to minimize the development of stereotypes, prejudice, inflexibility, and ethnocentrism (Olson, 1982, p. 25).

Rivers cautions that "culture" should not become just another theoretical or abstract area of study, since:

> If language learners are to communicate at a personal level with individuals from other cultural backgrounds, they will need not only to understand the cultural influences at work in the behavior of others, but also to recognize the profound influence patterns of their own culture exert over their thoughts, their activities, and their forms of linguistic expression (1981, p. 316).

Though the goal of cultural understanding has long been stated in explicit terms in the Alberta curriculum and finds widespread support in the literature of the field, research has indicated that it is very poorly implemented in Alberta schools (Mayor, 1984; Parker, 1975; Tardif, 1978). That this situation is prevalent elsewhere in North America is also documented in the literature (Chastain, 1976). Culture poses a problem for language teachers who are, on the whole, inadequately prepared to teach it (Rivers, 1981). In addition, "culture" is a poorly understood concept; it refers to something abstract and

difficult to grasp immediately because one is part of one's own culture. Culture forms an aspect of the taken-for-grantedness of our existence. It involves the "implicit norms and conventions of a society, its methods of 'going about doing things', its historically transmitted but also adaptive and creative ethos, its symbols and its organization of experience" (Loveday, 1982, p. 34).

Another way of understanding culture is to conceive of it as knowledge: "a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves" (Goodenough, 1964, p. 36). If we conceive of culture as knowledge of how to behave (the idea of competence), then it is something we all possess within our own societies, even if this knowledge is rarely at a conscious, verbalized level. In fact, there seems to be a built-in taboo that prevents our bringing this knowledge about ourselves to the conscious level. Culture is very difficult to talk about and yet is central to the way we live and express ourselves, and is evident in our attitudes and assumptions about the world around us.

In theory at least, an individual may become competent in more than one culture or possess varying degrees of competence in more than one culture. Such an individual would have a cultural repertoire (Goodenough, 1971). However, the communicative competence of a second language learner should perhaps be seen in a different light from that of a native speaker. Stern (1983) has suggested that in addition to grammatical and sociolinguistic competence, which would be limited in a second language user, a third skill used by the learner would be knowing how to be a "foreigner", i.e., knowing how to compensate for problems in communication (also referred to as strategic competence by Canale & Swain, 1980). Seelye (1984) has stated that intercultural skill is "the ability to function as a stranger and to interact with strangers" (p. 236).

Thus, in the second language teaching/learning situation, culture may more usefully be seen as "that knowledge of the patterned ways of life of the target people that

would enable a student of a given target language to communicate effectively with native speakers in typical situations" (Tardif, 1978, p. 19). Such knowledge consists not only of factual content but also includes behavioral and affective components. Movement towards the teaching of communicative competence in the second language classroom is a step towards imparting the cultural dimension of a non-native language within a language-in-culture perspective. However, disappointment with the current teaching of culture underscores the need for an examination of what and how our students learn about culture in the second language classroom.

Cultural habits are similar to language skills in the sense that the native speaker operates within the system at a subconscious level. The task of the language teacher is to help students examine their own culturally determined values and assumptions as well as those of the speakers whose language they are studying. Seelye (1984) has suggested that:

> Teachers can make a difference in the way we see ourselves. They can structure the curriculum so that students can examine the many ways cultural conditioning affects the quality of human thought and action (p. 217).

This is a very difficult task for most language teachers, even if their students are interested in the people who speak the language they are studying. As adolescents, students know very little about the basic aspects of their own culture, and most of them are too young to have had the experiences necessary to gain more than a superficial, stereotyped knowledge of other cultures or of subcultures within their own society.

Since the development of cultural sensitivity and the enhancement of personal development are coupled together as goals of the Nine-Year French Program, this study will attempt to determine whether students are achieving these goals through the Extended French Program. If results indicate that students are not "culturally sensitive", an opportunity for renewed questioning of the cultural rationale for language learning and its implementation in Alberta schools will present itself.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms employed in this study are defined as follows.

French-as-a-second language program (FSL) will refer to the program in the Edmonton Public School System which follows a traditional core format. It begins at the Grade Seven or Grade Ten level, is offered for approximately forty minutes a day, and involves explicit second language instruction.

Extended French will refer to the nine-year program within the Edmonton Public School System which is offered to students beginning in Grade Four. This program was designed to provide students not only with language instruction but also with the opportunity to use the second language in the study of other subjects and topics. At the elementary level, Extended French students receive 30 minutes of French and 30 minutes of instruction in another subject or subjects in French each day. Students enrolled in the junior high school program receive a minimum of 160 minutes a week. Aspects of Francophone culture are an explicit component of the program. (Based on Second Language Programs 1984-1985, Edmonton Public Schools.)

Curriculum will refer not only to the subject matter or content of a given program but also to the entire instructional process; in short, curriculum means "what can and should be taught to whom, when, and how" (Eisner & Vallance, 1974, p. 2).

Culture will refer to a system of values, attitudes, norms and conventions which provide the patterns of everyday life that "enable individuals to relate to their place under the sun" (Seelye, 1984, p. 26).

## Delimitations

This study has concerned itself only with an examination of the perceptions of Grade Six and Grade Nine Extended French students towards culture study within their second language program. No attempt has been made to include within the study sample those students who have chosen not to take French, or who have dropped French, nor to include students in immersion or bilingual programs, or in the traditional FSL program. In addition, the views of only 40 students at four different schools were sought.

## Limitations

Since classroom observation was not employed as a research technique, findings are limited by the fact that they are based solely on students' responses to instruments administered by the researcher. Thus, a major limitation is inherent in the use of the questionnaire, written tasks, and the interview as major data collection devices. The possibility of respondents misinterpreting questions or not being able to fully express their views or ideas within the limitations of the instruments as administered is always present. The interview is difficult to carry out well and the possibility of bias or lack of skill on the part of the interviewer does exist.

## Assumptions

This study is based on the following assumptions:

1. That students at the Grade Six and Grade Nine levels would be sufficiently mature to be able to articulate their ideas about, experience with, and interest in culture study.

2. That perceptions of students can be adequately assessed using the instruments designed for this study, and that what students say, as indicated by responses to questionnaire items, the written tasks, and oral interviews, is indeed true in fact.

## Organization of the Thesis

This chapter has identified and described the problem of the present study. The purpose and significance of the study were presented, and in addition, terms were defined and the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations were provided. The following chapter summarizes the related literature. Chapter III discusses the design of the study. Particular emphasis is placed on the description of the sample, the instrumentation, and the procedure for collection and analysis of data. Chapter IV provides a descriptive analysis of the data and a discussion of the findings. Chapter V includes a summary of the study, the conclusions based on the findings, implications for education, and some suggested directions for further research.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

## Introduction

A thorough literature search revealed very few studies that focused specifically on students' notions of culture or on learners' perceptions of or reactions to culture as a facet of their language learning experience. In addition, very little research has been conducted with the aim of testing the claims usually put forward in defense of culture study. Little is actually known about cognitive or affective change in students in second language programs with a strong cultural component.

In general, the literature on second language pedagogy of the last two decades underscores a preoccupation within the second language teaching profession with the questions of how to define "culture" as it relates to language teaching, how to describe the relationship between culture and language, whether culture should be taught in the second language classroom, and if so, how it might be integrated into a second language curriculum which has traditionally been oriented toward literature and grammar. Recent literature reflects a concern among second language educators for developing programs with a cultural component focusing on cross-cultural communication and understanding, in response to the claim that language study coupled with a cultural component promotes an understanding of the people from other cultures (Robinson, 1981) or the broader claim that positive attitude change is an outcome of language learning (Wilkes, 1983). Nevertheless, the literature suggests that, in spite of its purported potential for effecting attitude change in students, culture study in the second language classroom is often seen as second in importance to the mastery of linguistic form and, for several reasons, remains poorly understood among teachers (Morain, 1971; Richards, 1976; Stern, 1983; Tardif, 1978).

In this review, the following questions will be used as guidelines for discussion of literature as it relates to the central problem of this study:

1. How has "culture" been defined?
2. What have been the influences on the evolution of the concept of culture in second language pedagogy?
3. What has been the rationale for teaching/learning culture in the second language classroom? What learner outcomes have been seen as desirable?
4. What have been identified as problem areas in the teaching/learning of culture?
5. What alternatives have been proposed for a culture-based curriculum?

## "Culture" Defined

The relationship between society, language, and culture poses a dilemma for language teachers, who have for over a century tended to teach a second language as a purely formal system and then have had to remind themselves that their students should be given a general introduction to its native speakers and their way of life. In the past, culture in Britain and North America was frequently interpreted in a dual sense: a) as the personal development, through language learning, of a cultivated mind: the training of "reasoning powers", "intelligence", "imagination", and the "artistic faculties" (Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters, 1929); and b) as "knowledge of the history and the institutions of foreign peoples and of their psychology as expressed in their ideals and standards, and of their contribution to civilization" (Fife, 1931, p. 249). Thus, culture teaching focused on history, institutions, and customs as well as on the distinctive contributions of the foreign country to human civilization. After World War II, this view of culture began to yield to a social science perspective on culture as language teaching theorists began to recognize that anthropology and sociology might offer a theoretical framework for teaching about culture and society (Stern, 1983).

Anthropologists have for more than a century subscribed to the general view that the term "culture" stands for the way of life of a people, the sum of their learned behavior patterns, attitudes, and material things (Hall, 1959). Beyond this, however, its precise meaning has remained unclear. Attempts by anthropologists to provide "scientific" or "operational" definitions of the term have tended to reflect contemporary popular trends in social science but, although seen as a complex and dynamic phenomenon, in general, culture has remained a "muddied" concept that "lacks the rigorous specificity which characterizes many less revolutionary and useful ideas" (Hall, 1959, p. 44). Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1954) examined approximately 300 definitions of the term "culture". Although no single definition emerged, culture was seen as a very broad concept embracing all aspects of the life of man, with emphasis on a social heritage which provides patterns for living to a group of people.

More recently, the influence of developments in cognitive psychology and Chomskian linguistics has been evident; anthropologists now define culture in more cognitive terms. Goodenough (1971) described culture ideationally as a "system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting" (p. 41); i.e., what one has to know in order to act appropriately or competently as a member of a given group includes knowing not only what to do oneself but also how to anticipate the actions of others. According to this view, an individual may be competent in more than one culture, or possess varying degrees of competence in more than one culture, and thus have a cultural repertoire.

## Culture as an Evolving Concept in Second Language Pedagogy

Language teachers have been somewhat reluctant to accept a broadly defined social science approach to culture, since they have traditionally understood culture in the 19th century sense of personal refinement, the fine arts, and achievements of a society

and because they lack the academic background that the anthropological perspective implies (Herron, 1980; Seelye, 1974). However, the anthropological view of culture has significantly influenced the evolution of thought about culture among language teaching theorists. The idea of the study of language combined with a study of culture and society is reflected in the leading works on language teaching theory of the last few decades (e.g., Brooks, 1960/1964; Chastain, 1971/ 1976; Lado, 1957, 1964; Nostrand, 1966, 1974; Rivers, 1968/1981). These and other theorists have given preference to the more encompassing anthropological view of culture but have at the same time tried to integrate it with the older view of culture as civilization, more familiar to humanistically trained teachers. Brooks (1968), for instance, recognized the need for a definition of culture that is widely agreed upon and which is meaningful in terms of a second language classroom. He captured the distinction between the "best" of society and the "all" of that society in the terms "formal culture" and "deep culture". Formal culture refers to the individual's relationship to refinement in thought, action, and the surface manifestations of culture, and deep culture indicates the individual's gradual accommodation to the value system and patterns of everyday life of those around him. Politzer (1971) outlined a similar distinction between "capital C" culture, representing the sum total of a people's achievements and contributions to civilization, and "small c" culture, representing the learned and shared behavior of the individuals of a community. Although literature and curriculum guides of the last decade have reflected a continuing debate over the meaning that language teachers should assign to the term "culture", it is clear that the anthropological view of culture is now widely accepted as the focus for teaching culture in the classroom and that cultural understanding and cross-cultural comparisons are firmly established as necessary components of language pedagogy (Alberta Six-Year French Program Curriculum Guide, 1979; Chastain, 1976; Seelye, 1974, 1984).

The relationship between language and culture has also been the subject of much controversy among anthropologists and language teaching theorists. Whether one argues

that language influences culture, as did structural linguists Sapir and Whorf (Carroll, 1964), or that culture influences language (Boas, 1949), or that the two are interdependent (Chafe, 1970; Hoijer, 1953), it remains an area of debate and and is seen in the literature as somewhat of a non-issue for the language teacher (Rivers, 1981). The prevailing view has been that the two are inseparable (Brooks, 1964). Whether we view language as a constituent of culture (Richards, 1976), or language as culture (Durham, 1980), it has been argued that because of the close alliance between language per se and the everyday activities of a speech community, culture must occupy a central place in the second language learning experience if students are to begin to understand a language and its speakers and to communicate effectively with them (House, 1973; Sommer, 1974). As Politzer (1965) has suggested ,"Unless we understand the cultural situation in which an utterance is made, we may miss its full implication or meaning. The tie of language study with culture is not an 'option' to be discussed in terms of the preferences of the teacher but actually a practical necessity" (p. 130).

The impact of these and other studies on language pedagogy has been extremely important. It is now widely agreed that the language learner should not only study the cultural context (language and culture) but should also be made aware of the interaction between language and culture (language in culture, culture in language) and to view the two as inextricably intertwined (Stern, 1983).

## Rationale for Inclusion of Culture in Second Language Curriculum

A curriculum that is essentially cultural in content and reflective in approach has long been considered fundamental to a liberal education and the pursuit of excellence. The goal of personal development and self-awareness through language study has also been seen as an essential part of such a curriculum (Heffernan, 1986; Herron, 1980).

The trend toward a focus on the learner and student-centered syllabuses, which gained momentum during the 1970s, also lent support to the combining of culture study with language study because of the widespread belief that students are interested in the people who speak the language they are studying (Chastain, 1976). Students may also be motivated to learn a language if programs could be made more relevant to their concerns by the inclusion of socio-cultural topics. In the United States during the 70s, the political and economic circumstances of an increasingly tension-filled world brought to the forefront the need for Americans to communicate in other languages in order to achieve the kind of cultural understanding essential to international cooperation. The President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies (1979) and the emergence of global education with emphases on transnational issues and cultural awareness (Torney-Purta, 1981) provided needed impetus to the language teaching profession's attempt to place the cultural component of the language program in a new perspective in recognition of the fact that previous curricula had yielded widespread disappointment. As Guntermann (1981) stated, "While the goals of communicative proficiency and cultural understanding are not new, they have never been achieved by the majority of foreign language students" (p. 99). In fact, very few students seemed to be emerging from second language classrooms endowed with "a deep understanding of the target culture" or "increased cross-cultural sensitivity" (Morain, 1974, p. 149). Despite this, the late 70s and early 80s witnessed a tremendous upsurge of interest in global education curriculum development in the United States and renewed faith in language learning as the appropriate context for the enhancement of cultural awareness and positive intercultural communication (Szymanski, 1983).

A cultural rationale for language study in a traditional core framework has achieved more prominence in Canada since the 1970s partly because immersion programs have far outstripped core programs in terms of cognitive benefits (Martel, 1983; Stern, 1982), leaving core programs with a seriously weakened case in cognitive terms and with

a vacuum to fill in terms of realistic expectations and outcomes. The claim that second language study can expose all students to the reality that other peoples have other ways of understanding the world runs through the literature. This claim is linked to a parallel belief that language study which includes a cultural focus can yield positive affective outcomes in terms of student attitudes and interests (Grittner, 1983; Wilkes, 1983). Morain (1983) argues that "cultural understanding" has become for many citizens the primary justification for the study of foreign languages. However, there seems to be more agreement in current literature that culture needs to be taught systematically, rather than on an ad hoc, anecdotal basis, since "a sympathetic awareness of a target culture is by no means an automatic accompaniment to the language-learning process" (Wilkes, 1979, p. 33).

In summary, a variety of rationales for including a systematic study of culture in a second language program are identifiable in the literature:

1. Culture study will help to build and maintain motivation to learn the language (Allen & Valette, 1977; Grittner, 1983; Morain, 1971).
2. Words become meaningless symbols unless they are learned in association with their correct cultural referents, cultural values, and attitudes (Grittner, 1983; Seelye, 1972; Sommer, 1974). Thus, an understanding of cultural context can make communication more meaningful.
3. As part of a general education program, students should gain an understanding of the nature of culture itself (Chastain, 1976; Modern Language Association, 1953).
4. Students' ethnocentrism or cultural bondage must be reduced if we are to equip them to live in an increasingly intercultural international society (Guntermann, 1981; Modern Language Association, 1953). With the appropriate cultural information students should develop a higher degree of sensitivity to and tolerance for cultural differences than they had prior to second language study (Chastain, 1976).

5. Through contrastive culture study, students should acquire a fuller understanding of themselves and their own cultural background, thus enriching their lives (Hall, 1959; Modern Language Association, 1953; Rivers, 1976) and contributing to an awareness of the universality of human experience (Finocchiaro & Bonomo, 1973).

Translating these broad rationales into curricula which can be implemented in the classroom has not been easy. Several important reviews of culture in the second language class have attempted to bring some kind of cultural accountability into the teaching of foreign languages (Benseler, 1974; Jarvis, 1977; Morain, 1971; Nostrand, 1974; Seelye, 1972). The development of appropriate goals, methodologies, materials, and evaluation techniques has dominated the literature on culture in the second language classroom (Nostrand, 1974; Richards, 1976; Schmidt, 1981; Seelye, 1974). Nostrand (1974) has proposed that teachers focus on two primary goals of culture teaching: cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural understanding. He has argued that if the basic aim is to have students learn to communicate in the second language, and if we accept that emotions and thoughts cannot be understood apart from cultural referents, then these must be explicitly taught in the classroom. Further, if through knowledge <u>about</u> and experience <u>with</u> a phenomenon students can be taught to understand the reasons for culturally different behavior, then language teaching may bring about changes in attitudes and world-view among students (Nostrand, 1974, p. 274). He has also proposed a variety of experiential and cognitive techniques designed to bring about cross-cultural understanding among students (Nostrand, 1974). Seelye (1970, 1974), recognizing the need for specific means of realizing these ambitious goals, has proposed that teachers systematically write performance objectives for the teaching of cultural topics, focusing on seven main goals encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be developed. Lafayette (1978) has proposed 12 cultural goals which may be categorized and tested as knowledge, understanding, or behavior objectives. Jarvis (1977) has called these same categories of goals knowing, doing, and feeling. Guntermann (1981) has identified

"intercultural and international understanding" as one of four principal goals of the language class and has discussed this in terms of cognitive outcomes, skills, and affective goals. The taxonomies of Bloom et al. (1956), Krathwohl et al. (1964), and Valette and Disick (1972) have been recognized as useful guides for designing a culture-oriented language program that will not only promote an understanding and awareness of the values and attitudes of the target culture as well as an ability to function in the target culture, but also develop in the student greater curiosity, flexibility, and empathy to counteract ethnocentric attitudes.

## Problems Associated with Teaching/Learning Culture

In spite of considerable guidance provided to teachers in the form of suggested goals, content outlines, materials, and techniques for the teaching and testing of culture from the anthropological point of view, the transition from curriculum-as-plan to curriculum-in-use at the level of classroom practice has not been an easy one. The observation that the language teaching profession has been, in fact, comparatively slow to recognize its responsibility for preparing students to cope with a fast-changing, pluralistic society (Morain, 1971) appeared to be still current by the early 1980s. A number of studies have demonstrated that although repeated surveys of students have emphasized both communication skills and cultural understanding (Grittner, 1983; Guntermann, 1981; Strasheim, 1981) as preferred aspects of language programs, cultural goals and objectives have not been integrated into the instructional or evaluative practices in second language classrooms (Chastain, 1976; Myers, 1980; Robinson, 1981; Strasheim, 1981; Tardif, 1978).

In a study of the classroom interaction of outstanding foreign language teachers, Moskowitz (1976) found that in 88 classrooms studied less than one percent of class time was spent asking questions about the target culture. In her study of teacher perceptions

of the cultural goal in second language teaching in Alberta, Tardif found that although teachers are interested in teaching culture and seem to agree on what culture should consist of in second language teaching, there is little evidence of this in their classroom practice. She concluded that "teachers do not in reality perceive the teaching of culture as an integral part of language teaching. They consider the teaching of culture as an aside, something to be added to the regular program if time permits" (1978, p. 82).

A number of problems have existed which may help to explain this gap between theory and practice. Although lip-service has been paid to assigning a major role to culture in the second language classroom, teachers have felt ill-prepared to integrate it into what they perceive to be their major role, that of teaching communication skills (Lafayette, 1978; Moskowitz, 1976: Richards, 1976; Rivers, 1976; Seelye, 1974). The sheer enormity of converting all-embracing comprehensive concepts such as culture into relevant, manageable teaching units at the classroom level may seem intimidating, in spite of excellent, structured inventories such as Nostrand's Emergent Model, designed to help those trying to get some idea of a particular culture.[1] A second problem has involved the interaction of language and culture. Very little research of a sociolinguistic nature has been conducted to provide evidence in support of the integration of language and culture, and language teaching in general is still treated in isolation from sociocultural contexts (Loveday, 1982). It is then largely left to the teachers to improvise on an ad hoc basis in their own classrooms. Added to this is the problem that ethnographic studies of advanced industrialized societies, whose languages are more commonly studied in our schools, are scarce or nonexistent (Stern, 1983). In addition, no one has yet been able to adequately describe the workings of a cultural system (Loveday, 1982). The result is that second language teachers who are generally untrained in the social science disciplines lack the kind of sociocultural and sociolinguistic data they need for an adequate study of culture and are forced to rely on vignettes from their personal experience, scattered background knowledge, and intuition. The danger of stereotyping that may result from this kind of

"off the top of your head", "Hit or miss" approach to culture study has been widely noted in the literature (Grittner, 1983; Lafayette, 1978; Rivers, 1981; Ullmann, 1982).

Jarvis (1977) theorized that in the past major difficulties in teaching culture arose from a lack of integrated materials and a lack of training in "deep culture". In spite of a growing body of pedagogical techniques as well as a widespread consensus on the objectives of teaching culture, he has acknowledged that the average language teacher's commitment to culture has been erratic at best, stating that teachers have been "faced with a numbing overchoice in which aspects of culture to teach, pressed to teach language in less time than seems humanly possible, and poorly assisted by [their] training and texts" (1977, p. 151). To summarize, inadequacies in the areas of teacher preparation, time, and materials, as well as the question of what to teach have been repeatedly identified as problem areas in the teaching of culture (Morain, 1971, 1974; Seelye, 1972).

## Alternatives for a Culture-Based Curriculum

Although the field of language pedagogy has struggled for decades with the questions of how to define culture and how to justify the claim of cultural benefits of language study within the framework of traditionally grammar-oriented language courses, only recently has the systematic approach to curriculum development and change known as curriculum theory provided a framework around which a rebuilding of the language syllabus may occur. In particular, the conceptualization of three main components of the systems- behavioral curriculum design [(a) purposes and content; (b) instruction; and (c) evaluation] are of direct importance to language pedagogy. Evaluations of the literature on the place of "culture" in the "language" curriculum have highlighted some of the inadequacies with the way in which curricula have been built and implemented in the past and are beginning to pave the way for alternative visions of language learning in a culture-based curriculum framework.

Culture certainly appears to have a secure place in foreign language curricula today. A widespread consensus on the purposes and content of culture study is evident in the literature. Cultural goals and objectives, based on the taxonomies of Bloom et al. and Krathwohl et al., have often been phrased in terms of the anticipated learner understandings, attitudes, and behaviors to be developed. Some learner outcomes have been also expressed in terms of performance objectives for specified content areas. General objectives for cultural content, accompanied by guidelines for instructional aspects, represent the statement of anticipated products and processes for culture study.

The third component, evaluation, refers to the assessment of whether teaching achieves its object. It is perhaps in this area that the weaknesses of current visions of language curricula reveal themselves. The rationale for inclusion of a "cultural component" in the curriculum, based in part on investigations of the relationship between attitudes, motivation, and achievement, flows from the assumptions that students are extremely interested in the people who speak the language they are studying (Chastain, 1976) and that the ability to learn a language is directly related to how students feel about the people who speak the language (Grittner, 1983). Thus, "culture" has been seen in a utilitarian sense, as a motivating device to spark students' interest in the "main" task of mastery of linguistic form, without sufficient attention to the question of whether cultural understanding is in fact ever achieved or achievable within this curricular model. In this view, "culture" has been clearly viewed as playing a secondary role, and the rationale for its inclusion in the curriculum becomes unclear.

When "cultural elements" are simply added on to an already overloaded language syllabus, the message given to the teaching profession is contradictory, but at its core, indicates an unwillingness to take the sociocultural goal seriously. In fact, it is clear from even a brief review of the literature that the language teaching profession has long advocated the "cultural benefit" of language study without teaching culture per se in the classroom and indeed without teaching for any affective goals. When culture is included

in the program, either by the materials or by the teacher, it is not always stated clearly why the cultural element is being included. In addition, because of the pressure to teach culture in the second language itself, most students drop out before "culture" is introduced and thus receive no cultural benefit at all (Parker, 1975).

Students, according to Allen (1969), have a vague feeling that they should learn about the culture and that this learning should in turn help in studying the language, but they do not usually know how or why this benefit will take place. In her study of Grade Nine students' reactions to second language learning, Mayor (1984) found that students displayed contradictory feelings regarding the study of culture. They were unsure of what it was and should consist of; in fact, only 23% of respondents agreed that one of the most important goals of language study is to learn about the people who speak the language, whereas 95% agreed that learning how to speak was one of the most important goals. This finding led Mayor to conclude that students' strong tendencies to divorce the acquisition of linguistic skills from the cultural component reflected a lack of commitment on the part of teachers to the cultural goal. Even worse, as Chastain notes, "at the present time, many students are not gaining a basic familiarity with the second-language culture. In fact, many students do not realize that culture is a course goal" (1976, p. 384).

Robinson (1978) has suggested that perhaps the language teaching profession has never really done anything in terms of direct instruction towards the sociocultural goal, possibly because the assumption has been that any type of language instruction will automatically lead to a greater understanding, tolerance, and a more positive attitude toward the target culture. In other words, even though there is some evidence that a positive attitude towards the target culture promotes language acquisition, it does not necessarily follow that all language learning activities promote cross-cultural understanding. In fact, in the absence of classroom practices designed specifically to promote cross-cultural awareness, most adolescents are likely to operate from an ethnocentric point of view (Chastain, 1976).

One may assume that the cultural position of the adolescent is likely to have arisen not so much from a consciously chosen point of view as from a background of exposure primarily to one sociocultural system. In the absence of actual contact with other cultures, adolescents are likely to have formed attitudes or perceptions based on stereotypes acquired from magazines, movies, and other aspects of popular culture, and considering the tendency of the adolescent to conformity with peer group norms, are not likely to challenge commonly held stereotypes. If teachers present culture in an "us-them" fashion, they do not substantially change students' stereotypes and may indeed contribute to the formation of negative attitudes in their students. Tuttle, Guitart, and Zampogna (1979) in one of the few empirical studies to investigate this topic found that attitudes towards Puerto Ricans were significantly changed by slide presentations which stressed similarities of daily life activities, whereas students' attitudes were not changed by presentations stressing differences, leading the researchers to suggest that similarities rather than differences in lifestyle be stressed in cultural presentations in order to promote positive feelings about another culture, since "the affective domain is not one that teachers should leave to chance" (Tuttle et al., 1979, p. 181).

In addition, few studies have investigated students' concepts or understanding of culture or their attitudes towards culture study in the second language class. The argument that studying a foreign language has the benefit of giving the student an appreciation for a new and different culture has found little justification in terms of an evaluation of outcomes. In general, the literature on culture in second language curricula has been speculative, inspirational, and somewhat theoretical. Generalizations are common, whereas investigations concerned with questions of cognitive and affective change in students as a result of culture study are rare. Nostrand (1974) noted the difficulty of adequately testing the effects of culture learning, both cognitively and affectively, in the absence of actual experience which indicates how vitally important it is that students have the opportunity to explore their own culture in contact with the second

culture in order for similarities and differences to emerge. Learning information about the second culture constitutes only the first step; other kinds of understandings of language and culture need to be encouraged, using student interests and desires as a point of departure for meaningful, real life communicative situations (Jarvis, 1977; Jones, 1982).

Robinson (1981) has argued that the language our students learn in the second language classroom is "hollow" in a cultural sense, reduced to a code, and that in order for students to begin to understand and identify with speakers of another language, they must be personally involved in learning cultural messages. The approach to language study as a process, rather than a product, recalls Nostrand's (1974) stress on the need for students to internalize a new semantic system experientally and cognitively, for both experience of and reflection about a language are essential if the student is to feel at home in it. Edgerton, Jr. (1980) has suggested that it is not intellectual knowledge about but rather personal involvement with another language that will lead to respect for other cultures, as well as to the realization that each one of us is a product of a culture. Robinson has argued that rooted in his own culture, each individual student's learning will be a subjective process:

> ...we will need to develop a strategy of merging the student subjectively with the concepts (related to the cultural message), catapulting him into the cognitive and affective experiences of actively communicating, valuing, and devaluing. Experiments have indicated that personal involvement - the process of cognitive discovery, cognitive dissonance, or intellectual challenge combined with emotional experience - facilitates cultural identification and acquisition of the language itself (Robinson, 1978, p. 142).

Several alternative curricular models have been proposed as means of achieving cultural awareness. Interdisciplinary cooperation between foreign language and social studies educators has given life to "global education" in recognition of the fact that language competence and understanding of the world are both necessary ingredients for global literacy. Strasheim (1981) has suggested that the emergence of global education has provided language educators with the opportunity to reconstruct the curriculum "from the ground up" around the central notion that language is the medium and culture is the

message. According to this view, language-culture study carries the potential for opening the student to new ways of viewing the world and to an understanding of how various languages and cultures interact.

Another proposed curricular model in which culture takes the central position is based on Paulo Freire's "problem-posing education". Through a shift in roles from teachers as dispensers of knowledge and students as recipients to teachers and students mutually reflecting on a cultural theme, it becomes possible to develop the ability to think critically about the world. Crawford-Lange (1981, 1982) has suggested ways in which language learning may be structured into this framework. In an elaboration on problem-posing education, Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) have proposed the "unthinkable", a process for the integration of language and culture which they call the "interactive language/culture learning process", in which culture is the "driver" of the curricular program. This model provides for the development of a theory of culture and for the full integration of language and culture, the missing elements in other curricular designs. It proposes "the development of cultural proficiency in the target culture through the processing of culture in language" (Crawford-Lange & Lange, 1984, p. 162). Culture and language are not loosely intermingled but require each other. "Without language, culture learning is incomplete because its expression is removed. Without cultural orientation, the language returns to a contentless exercise" (Crawford-Lange & Lange, 1984, p. 162). The authors have cautioned that this model has weaknesses in the areas of resources, teacher development, and tradition in language teaching. However, because of the emphasis placed on students' cultural awareness within the communicative model, it expects the use of language as a means of accomplishing perceptions, an understanding, and a valuing of the second culture. The implications of this model for language teaching and learning are enormous. For a start, it would require a very different approach to teacher development and a far greater willingness to view language-in-culture as an interpretive scheme or as a "perspective onto the world" (Martel, 1983). Yet, if the

profession continues its retreat from the possibility of communicative competence, it must then abandon "cultural awareness" as part of its rationale for language study and pass this responsibility on to Social Studies, for it is far too important a task to be left in limbo.

## Summary

Literature on the role of culture in language learning has been primarily limited to furthering an understanding of the concept of culture among teachers, establishing a rationale for linking language and culture study, and developing goals, methodologies, materials, and evaluation procedures for teaching culture in the second language class. "Culture" has mainly been seen in an instrumental sense, as a vehicle for encouraging students to pursue language study and communicate with speakers of a second language. Research has begun to reveal some of the difficulties encountered at the level of classroom practice with the way we have conceptualized culture (Tardif, 1978). If second language educators are serious about crossing multicultural barriers, then more must be known about students' interest in and understanding of cultural messages in the classroom (Rivers, 1981; Robinson, 1978). In addition, teachers must construct a process which provides students with the skill to re-form perceptions of culture, so that students may become conscious of the approach towards culture that they are using and can verbalize their understanding of culture (Crawford-Lange & Lange, 1984). A growing interest in the entire question of students' attitudes towards culture in second language pedagogy and research is evident in the literature and indicates a gradual, if not widespread, acceptance of a student-centered, culture-based curriculum, as well as a renewed questioning of the purpose of language study and our understanding of the notion of culture.

# CHAPTER III

# DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The chapter begins with an explanation of the selection of the sample. Following this is a description of the instruments used in the study and the testing of the instruments in a pilot project. A discussion concerning the procedure used for collection and analysis of the data completes the chapter.

## The Sample

The study involved a total of 40 students enrolled in Extended French classes in four schools within the jurisdiction of the Edmonton Public School Board. Two schools were K-6 schools and two were junior high schools. Twenty of these students were in Grade Six and the balance were in Grade Nine. Ten students were selected from each school. In order to be consistent across the sample, students in the Extended French program were selected at the junior high level, as opposed to FSL, because French-as-a-second-language is offered at the elementary level within the Extended French program only. Students included in the sample were chosen on the basis of the following criteria:

1. those enrolled in Extended French or equivalent program for at least two consecutive years (for Grade Six students) or five consecutive years (for Grade Nine students);
2. those who came from an Anglophone or at least non-Francophone family background;
3. those who had had all previous schooling in a predominantly Anglophone community, preferably following the Alberta curriculum.

An attempt was also made to choose equal numbers of girls and boys. This was possible in three of the four classes, but in the fourth, more girls had to be chosen because of low enrollments (eight out of ten students in the group were girls).

The characteristics of the teachers of the students included in the sample were also considered. All four teachers were non-native speakers of French and were formally

trained as FSL teachers. None of the teachers had had extensive personal contact with a Francophone milieu. In addition, all of the teachers had employed the Alberta Education Nine-Year French Program Curriculum Guide, as well as the Edmonton Public Schools Extended French Program Objectives and Content for Grades 4, 5 & 6 outline (in the case of the Grade Six teachers) and the Extended French culture units (in the case of the Grade Nine teachers) as guidelines for their programs. Teachers also used prescribed texts: Bonjour Canada for Grade Six and Attention for Grade Nine. Each of the teachers was interviewed before the research was begun in order to determine whether the students in each class would be suitable subjects for the research considering the criteria outlined above. A further criterion discussed with each teacher was the issue of consent.

Two students of the original ten from each class were also selected to form a sub-sample and were asked to take part in interviews to be conducted after completion of the questionnaire and written tasks. These students were selected randomly from among those who volunteered to participate in the interviews.

## The Instruments

The instruments used in this study consisted of a written questionnaire, two open-ended tasks to be completed in writing, and an interview schedule.

### The Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix II) consisted of three pages of questions designed to obtain background information on each of the students participating in the study. The answers to these questions were intended to provide the researcher with information regarding each student's sex, grade, date and place of birth, linguistic background, current language competence, contact with speakers of languages other than

English, length of residence in Edmonton, place of residence other than Edmonton, if any, length of any visit to a Francophone region or country, attitude towards French course, and intention to continue or discontinue French studies. It was the intention of the researcher to use each student's responses to the questionnaire items as a context for the analysis of his or her approach to the written tasks and responses to interview questions. The questionnaire was also meant to act as a further screening device to eliminate any students who did not satisfy the criteria established for selection of the sample.

Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 15, and 16 were based on the student questionnaire designed to obtain background information for students taking the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery found in Robinson (1981:184). Items 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13 were based on questionnaire items found in a study by Jones (1972) entitled Contact and Attitudes toward Francophones. Items 9 and 10 were based loosely on the "Desire to Learn French" scale found in Jakobovits (1970), and items 18 and 19 were based loosely on questionnaire items used by Mayor (1984) in her study Student Reaction to Second Language Learning. The wording of each item was changed somewhat to suit the purposes of this study. The questionnaire was further revised taking into consideration criticisms and recommendations of the researcher's advisor and two graduate students in modern language curriculum and instruction.

## Written Tasks

The next instrument used in the study consisted of two written tasks. The purpose of these tasks was to determine which topics and questions students would select as being relevant to an understanding of the way of life in Alberta and in Quebec and to assess their ability to organize in written form both general categories and particular features pertaining to the way of life in Alberta and Quebec so as to suggest a knowledge

of differences and similarities between Francophone culture and their own. Each task was presented as a simulation and was designed in such a way as to require the student to picture himself or herself in an imaginary situation of culture contact. In each simulation, the student was required to provide information in a structured fashion that would reflect his/her perception of what it would be important for an outsider to know about another society in order to understand the way of life of its people (see Appendix II). The two simulations were designed by the researcher, were tested during the pilot study, and then were further revised in light of discussions with the researcher's advisor. These simulations were seen as best suiting the purposes of the study because:

1. No other such devices could be found in the literature.
2. They reflected quite closely real life situations which students could imagine themselves in, and as such, provided a means by which the somewhat difficult and nebulous subject of "understanding of culture" could be approached. In other words, they provided a context for subsequent interviews, a point of departure from which the student's views on culture could be broached.
3. They could be administered in the school situation given a limited amount of time, manpower, and money.

## The Interview

One section of the study depended on the interview as the main data collection technique (see Appendix II). The main purpose of the interviews conducted was to gather information which could answer the following questions:

1. What strategies do students use to complete culture-related tasks?
2. What is the perceived relevance of learning about culture in the second language class?
3. What would students specify as topics of interest and preferred activities in culture study?

4. What are student's perceptions of cultural competence, (knowledge, behavioral, and affective dimensions), i.e., what do students think they should learn about a culture in order to communicate with people in that culture?

5. How would students describe what it means "to be in a culture"? Are these students "culturally aware"? That is, does "culture" have any personal relevance for them or is it something that "other" people have? Have they developed a sense of knowing how to be a "foreigner" (Stern, 1983)?

A list of eighteen guiding questions was developed by the researcher and was intended to be used in structured oral, audio-taped interviews with a sub-sample of students who had previously completed the background information questionnaire and the two written tasks. Students were selected for interviews on a random basis from among those who volunteered to participate.

## The Pilot Project

In April, 1984, a pilot project was undertaken in order to determine the usefulness of the three instruments to be employed in the study itself and to determine whether changes needed to be made in the design of the study. Initially, eight Grade Six and Seven students in a school within the jurisdiction of the County of Parkland were chosen as volunteer participants in the pilot. Permission was sought from the principal of the school, the teacher of the students, and each student's parents to administer: a) a short oral questionnaire similar to the written questionnaire used in the study itself; b) the two written tasks in a form similar to but not identical to that which was used in the study itself; and c) a short oral interview of approximately 5-10 minutes in length following completion of the written tasks.

The questions used in the interview were also similar to but not identical to those used in the study itself. A copy of the materials used in the pilot project can be found in

Appendix I. The interviews were not audio-taped, but notes were taken by the researcher and were later used to modify the instruments. Of the eight students who had initially volunteered to participate in the pilot project, one was excluded because he had not had any previous instruction in French, and another student was absent from class on the day that the interviews were conducted. Thus, six students participated in the pilot project. Two students were in Grade Six and four were in Grade Seven. The Grade Six students were not currently enrolled in French but had been in Grades Four and/or Five. The Grade Seven students were all enrolled in the school's FSL program.

The students, to varying degrees, all experienced difficulties in completing the tasks. These were discussed with the researcher in the oral interviews. One significant problem led to changes in the design of the study. Some students failed to recognize the difference between the two tasks. Although they were able to establish categories or main ideas that would be descriptive of the way of life in Alberta or Quebec, they tended to lack knowledge of particular details of life in Quebec, with the result that their approach to Task Two closely paralleled their approach to Task One. The two Grade Six students experienced more difficulty in this regard than did the Grade Seven students. This problem was likely attributable to the following factors:

1. Although all the students had had some French instruction, only the Grade Seven students were currently enrolled in French. All reported that, although very little class time was spent learning about how people in Quebec live, they felt that they had learned at least that life was somewhat different in a number of respects and so were able to provide a few details in their answers to Task One.

2. The two tasks had been designed in such a way as to require students to make a list of topic headings or main ideas, so it is perhaps not surprising that their responses to the second task were so similar to the first, especially in the absence of personal knowledge of details.

As a result of these findings of the pilot project, the researcher decided to modify the design of the study in the following manner:

1. The sample would be restricted to students in the Extended French program so as to ensure more consistency of previous French instruction and so as to increase the likelihood that students would have learned more about cultural topics.
2. The sample would include Grade Six and Grade Nine Extended French students nearing the end of their school year, so as to increase the likelihood that meaningful comparisons between the two groups could be made.
3. The wording of Task Two was changed so that students would be asked to formulate questions about what it is like to live in Quebec, rather than to provide answers.

## The Procedure

### Collection of Data

Upon completion of the pilot project, the instruments were revised, and permission to conduct the research was sought and obtained from the Research and Liaison Division of the Edmonton Public School Board. The principal and teachers of each school were then contacted regarding the feasibility of conducting the research within the specified time limits. Once permission of the schools was granted, in May of 1984, appointments to meet with the teachers were made. The researcher visited each teacher, gave each a copy of the materials to be used and provided sufficient copies of a letter of consent to be taken home by each student, with an explanation of the purpose of the research and the instruments to be administered. In addition, the selection criteria were discussed and specific class time was set aside for administration of the instruments (40 minutes at each school for the questionnaire and written tasks and a further 40 minutes for the taped interviews).

The teachers were asked to inform their students of the researcher's intention to administer the instruments, to distribute letters of consent to the students, and to inform the researcher if in any cases consent could not be obtained. Subsequently, each teacher reported to the researcher that no parent had denied consent. The researcher then visited each school and the questionnaire and written tasks were completed by a group of 10 students at each school.

Following this, the researcher asked for volunteer participants for the interview phase of the study. Since at all four schools nearly every student was willing to participate, selection of a sub-sample was done on a random basis after background information obtained on each student in the questionnaire had been checked by the researcher. One student was initially excluded from the interview selection process because he had attended elementary school in Mexico and so did not satisfy the criteria previously established. Several others who had reported speaking other languages were asked to explain their answers. In all but three cases it was apparent that English was their dominant language and that, in varying degrees, they were less competent in their second and/or third languages. This fact was also verified with the teachers involved. The three exceptions involved three Grade Nine students who reported speaking a language other than English more often at home (Spanish, Hebrew, and Vietnamese). A decision was made to exclude them as well from the interview group but to interpret the criterion of "Anglophone family background" somewhat loosely so as to include all those students who reported speaking English at home more frequently than any other language.

After randomly selecting two students from each school to participate in interviews, a second meeting with the students was arranged. In the case of one school, interviews took place later in the same day that the questionnaire and written tasks had been completed. As this was not possible due to time-tabling constraints at the other three schools, arrangements were made to meet with the students during their next French

period. Audio-taped individual interviews of approximately 15-18 minutes were conducted with each student, using the interview protocol found in Appendix II.

## Analysis of Data

In this study, three instruments were used for the collection of data. Survey data obtained through the background questionnaire are presented by the use of relative frequencies (see Tables 1 through 19), and a discussion accompanies each table. In order to analyze data from the interviews and from the two written tasks, interview transcripts and responses to the tasks were read and re-read many times in an effort to find common themes which might: a) provide answers to the research questions; and b) yield meaningful comparisons between the Grade Six and Grade Nine groups.

## Summary

This chapter has presented a discussion of the instruments used in the study as well as a description of the selection of the sample and of the procedure used for the collection and analysis of data. A written questionnaire, two open-ended written tasks, and oral interview questions comprised the instrumentation. These were designed by the researcher, tested in a pilot study, and subsequently revised. The sample, consisting of 40 Grade Six and Grade Nine students, was selected from four Extended French classes in the City of Edmonton. The instruments were administered over a three week period in May, 1984. Questionnaire data were analyzed through the use of relative frequencies, and a qualitative analysis of written tasks and interview transcripts was conducted. A detailed descriptive analysis of data and discussion of findings is presented in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER IV

# DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, data obtained through the use of the background questionnaire, the two written tasks, and the taped interviews are presented and the findings are discussed.

## Student Background Questionnaires

### Analysis

Data pertaining to the sex, grade, age, and place of birth of students participating in the study are summarized in Tables 1 through 4. Data regarding linguistic background and language contact are presented in Tables 5 through 10. Tables 11 through 13 present data pertaining to length of residence in Edmonton, place of residence other than Edmonton, and time spent in a Francophone country or region of Canada. Tables 14 through 18 summarize findings from questionnaire items regarding the students' French course.

### Sex of Students

As indicated in Table 1, 50% of the Grade Six students were male, and 50% were female. However, because of the small size of the Grade Nine classes involved in the study, it was not possible to obtain a balance of males and females; thus, 35% were male, and 65% were female.

### Grade and Age of Students

As indicated in Table 2, 50% of the sample were in Grade Six, and 50% were in Grade Nine. Table 3 presents the ages of students at the time the research was

conducted. In the Grade Six group, 75% were 11 years old, and 25% were 12 years old. In the Grade Nine group, 60 % were 14, and 40% were 15 years of age.

Students' Place of Birth

As indicated in Table 4, 50% of the Grade Six group were born in Edmonton, 15% were born elsewhere in Alberta, 25% were born elsewhere in Canada except Quebec, none was born in Quebec, and 10% (two students) were born outside Canada (one in the United States and one in Singapore). Of the Grade Nine group, 65% were born in Edmonton, no one was born elsewhere in Alberta, 15% were born elsewhere in Canada except Quebec, none was born in Quebec, and 20% (four students) were born outside of Canada (two in Chile, one in Japan, and one in the United States).

Language Spoken in Home More Often Than Any Other

As indicated in Table 5, all of the Grade Six students reported that English was the language spoken in the home more often than any other, whereas 85% of the Grade Nine group indicated this to be so. In addition, in the Grade Nine group, Spanish, Hebrew, and Vietnamese were reported as the home language by one student each. These students were subsequently excluded from the interview sub-sample. That English is clearly the dominant home language of the majority of students was not surprising since this was one of the criteria specified by the researcher in initial discussions with teachers. However, since the teachers had failed to mention that another language was dominant in the homes of three Grade Nine students, this finding was somewhat surprising.

Languages Understood and Languages Spoken by Students

The responses to questions pertaining to questions about languages understood by students and languages spoken by students are summarized in Tables 6 and 7 and provide

a striking contrast to Table 5. None of the Grade Six students and only 10% of the Grade Nine students reported that they understood only English, whereas 65% of the Grade Six group and 60% of the Grade Nine group reported that they understood both English and French. Since the questionnaire did not attempt to assess competence in the second language, it is impossible to comment on this; however, quite a number of students qualified their answers by adding "a bit". A number of students in each group reported comprehension of languages other than English and French. One Grade Six student reported understanding English, French, and German, and two Grade Six students indicated that they understood English, French, German, and one other language (Dutch and Chinese). Two Grade Six students reported comprehending English, French, and one other language (Dutch and Italian), and two Grade Six students reported understanding English and one other language (Swedish and Chinese). Again, "a bit" was added as a qualifier on a number of questionnaires. Nevertheless, this degree of linguistic diversity was a surprise since in only three cases was the teacher aware of competence in any other language (the two students who specified Chinese and the student who reported understanding Dutch). In the Grade Nine group, three students reported understanding English, French, and Spanish, and three other students reported comprehension of English, French, and one other language (Vietnamese, Chinese, and Hebrew).

Table 7 summarizes languages spoken by students, and for the Grade Nine group, results parallel those found in Table 6, with two notable exceptions. One student who reported understanding a bit of Spanish in addition to English and French reported speaking ability in English and French only, and one student who indicated comprehending English and French reported speaking English only. In the Grade Six group, however, many students who had indicated comprehending languages other than English did not report speaking them. Five students (25%) reported speaking English only, and nine students (45%) reported speaking English and French. One student

reported speaking English, French, and German, one student reported speaking English, French, German, and Chinese, one student indicated he spoke English, French, and Dutch, and three reported speaking English and one other language (Swedish, Dutch, and Chinese). Again, many qualified their responses by adding "a bit" or "some" and, when asked directly by the researcher how well they felt they could speak their second or additional languages, none reported a preference for a language other than English or equal competence in a language other than English. In view of data indicated in Tables 5 and 8, this self-assessment may be viewed as evidence of over-reporting[2].

Language First Learned as a Child

Table 8 summarizes data pertaining to the language students first learned in childhood. English was reported to be the first language learned by 90% of Grade Six students and 85% of Grade Nine students. One Grade Six student reported learning Chinese first, and one reported learning English and Chinese together. It may be remembered from Table 5 that all of the Grade Six students reported that English is used more in the home than any other language, which indicates that English is now preferred over Chinese or that Chinese has fallen into disuse. Of the Grade Nine group, three students reported first learning a language other than English in childhood (Spanish, Hebrew, and Vietnamese). Since these same students reported that these languages were used in the home more often than any other, it may be assumed that these students have relatively equal competence in English and their home language.

Students' Contact with Speakers of Languages Other Than English

As indicated in Table 9, nearly every student (90% in Grade Six and 95% in Grade Nine) reported knowing a person, other than the student's French teacher, who could speak a language other than English. This finding was expected, in view of the fact that Edmonton's population reflects its multi-ethnic heritage. In addition, the question did

not ask if the student knew a native speaker of another language, and so anyone who had learned a second language, to any level of competence, could suffice. It was interesting to note, however, that the majority of students reported that family members were speakers of languages other than English, as indicated in Table 10. In the Grade Six group, 75% reported that either a parent or grandparent spoke a language other than English, and 45% reported that another family member (e.g., aunt, uncle, cousin) did so. Of the Grade Nine group, 65% had a parent or grandparent who spoke a language other than English, and 50% reported that another family member did so. In addition, 50% of the Grade Six group and 70% of the Grade Nine group reported that a friend or neighbour spoke a language other than English. Only 10% of the Grade Six group and 5% of the Grade Nine group did not respond to the question, since they had responded "no" to the previous question. Although the questionnaire did not attempt to ascertain whether family members, friends, or neighbours were native speakers of languages other than English, nevertheless, it is worth noting that the majority of students have had contact with other languages within their circle of family members, friends, and acquaintances.

Duration of Students' Residence in Edmonton

Table 11 summarizes data pertaining to the duration of students' residence in Edmonton. A majority of students (55% of Grade Six students and 70% of Grade Nine students) reported living in Edmonton for ten or more years, and a further 20% of Grade Six students and 15% of Grade Nine students reported living in Edmonton for five to nine years. Only 25% of Grade Six students and 15% of Grade Nine students had lived in Edmonton for fewer than five years, reflecting for the most part an Edmonton-schooled student group.

Place of Students' Residence Outside Edmonton

In addition, as indicated in Table 12, a majority of students in both groups (70% of Grade Six students and 55% of Grade Nine students) had grownup in Western Canada. It is worth noting, however, that a further 30% of Grade Six students and 40% of Grade Nine students had either lived in Ontario, the Maritimes, or outside of Canada. In addition, one student reported having lived in Quebec and, as a result, was excluded from the interview sub-sample.

Duration of Students' Visits to a Francophone Country or Region of Canada

The respondents were asked to indicate how much time they had spent visiting an area of Canada or another country where most people speak French in their daily lives. The results, summarized in Table 13, indicate that 75% of the Grade Six group had spent no time at all visiting a Francophone region, and a further 20% had spent less than two weeks. Only 45% of the Grade Nine group had spent no time at all, and an additional 25% had spent less than two weeks visiting a Francophone country or region of Canada. In addition, only one Grade Six student had spent more than two months visiting a Francophone area, whereas four Grade Nine students (including one student who had lived in Quebec) reported doing so. These results are interesting and seemed to indicate that the older Grade Nine students had more travel experience. However, in short conversations with students, it became apparent that these students had visited Francophone areas as much younger children rather than as part of a student exchange or class trip while in junior high school.

Grades in Which Students Enrolled in French

Table 14 presents data pertaining to the grades in which students were enrolled in French. Of the Grade Six group, 90% had been enrolled in French in Grades Four, Five, and Six, and 10% had taken French in Grades Five and Six only. Of the Grade Nine

group, 90% reported taking French from Grades Four to Nine, and 10% reported being enrolled in French from Grades Five to Nine, inclusive. These findings suggest a certain continuity or stability of enrollments in the Extended French program, Grade Four being the anticipated entry point into the program. (One teacher also commented that her class had been together as a group all through junior high, and many had even been friends in elementary school.)

Students' Attitudes Towards French Course

Data regarding the students' attitudes towards their French course are summarized in Tables 15 and 16. Students were asked to assess their French course in terms of degree of difficulty and degree of interest. Of the Grade Six group, 65% reported that French was similar to other courses in terms of difficulty, whereas only 30% of the Grade Nine group reported this to be so. A greater proportion of Grade Nine students tended to find French more difficult than other courses (35%) than did the Grade Six group (10%). However, it is interesting to note that 90% of the Grade Nine group reported that French was either more interesting than most subjects or about the same as other subjects, which suggests that the degree of difficulty experienced was not caused by lack of interest. One Grade Six student reported French to be the most interesting course, and a further 70% reported French to be more interesting than most subjects or about the same as other subjects. These findings are evidence of a somewhat more favourable attitude towards French as a school subject than might have been expected, in light of frequent complaints heard by many teachers of French that "French is boring", but perhaps it is no more boring than other subjects.

Students Intentions to Continue or Discontinue French Studies

Students were asked to report their intention to continue or discontinue French studies in the following year and their reasons for their decision. Tables 17 and 18

summarize data pertaining to this topic. All of the Grade Six students and 95% of the Grade Nine students reported that they planned to continue taking French. The only Grade Nine student who planned to discontinue French reported that a desire to take Spanish or German instead was her reason for doing so.

For the large majority of students (85% of Grade Six students and 75% of Grade Nine students), the argument that continuing French might help them to obtain a better job in the future was an important explanation for their decision. A further 25% of Grade Six students and 30% of Grade Nine students reported that they would continue because their parents wanted them to, whereas only one Grade Six student (5%) and no Grade Nine students reported their friends' plans to continue as a deciding factor. In addition, 20% of Grade Six students and 20% of Grade Nine students reported a desire to travel and make friends with Francophones as influencing their decision. Other students' remarks included: "I want to get into a French university"; "I live in a bilingual country" (from Grade Nine students), and "French is interesting"; "It will be handy"; "for fun"; "I've started learning it and might as well keep on" (from Grade Six students). These findings tend to suggest that most of these students are instrumentally rather than integratively oriented (Gardner & Lambert, 1972); that is, they tend to value a mastery of French because in the Canadian context it has been linked with better career opportunities and improved social status, rather than valuing acquisition of French in order to allow them to interact with Francophones on a social basis.

## Discussion

The purpose of this section of the chapter has been to present data concerning questionnaire respondents' linguistic background, current language competence, contact with speakers of languages other than English, duration of residence in Edmonton, place of residence other than Edmonton, duration of visits to a Francophone country or region

of Canada, perceptions of their French course in terms of degree of difficulty and degree of interest, and intention to continue or discontinue French studies. Some demographic data have been presented as well. Some general observations and conclusions are implicit in the data presented and may be summarized as follows:

1. A majority (two-thirds) of each group was Alberta-born. A minority of each group was born elsewhere in Canada, and the rest were born outside of Canada (10% of Grade Six students and 20% of Grade Nine students).

2. Nearly all the students reported English to be the language used in the home more often than any other. Only three students reported using another language more often than English at home. Thus, regardless of cultural heritage, the students may be described as living in an Anglophone home environment.

3. Approximately two-thirds of each group reported understanding English and French, and approximately one-quarter of each group reported understanding English, French, and one or more other languages. Smaller proportions reported speaking these languages, and many qualified their responses by adding "a bit". These self-assessments suggest that the majority of students do not have equal competence in English and their additional language(s) but rather that, in general, receptive capacities outstrip productive capacities. There may be a certain pride associated with a sense of growing competence in French within the Extended French program or a tendency to over-report linguistic repertoires in light of the study's focus of interest.

4. A majority of students reported English to be the first language learned in childhood.

5. A majority of students reported that family members, friends, or neighbours were speakers of languages other than English. Although it is beyond the scope of the questionnaire to assess competence in these languages, it may be concluded that most students are aware of the reality of other languages in their environment outside of the language classroom.

6. A majority of students reported living in Edmonton for ten or more years, indicating that most received their schooling here. Approximately one-third of the students, however, had lived at some point in Eastern Canada or outside of Canada, suggesting that some students had received a part of their schooling elsewhere.

7. A majority of students had never visited a Francophone country or region of Canada and thus had had no personal experience or prolonged contact with a Francophone milieu.

8. Approximately two-thirds of the Grade Six group reported French to be about the same as other courses in degree of difficulty, whereas the same proportion of Grade Nine students reported French to be more difficult or about the same as other subjects. Three-quarters or more of both groups reported French to be either more interesting or about the same as other subjects.

9. All the students, with one exception, declared an intention to continue French in the following year. Three-quarters or more of both groups responded that the possibility of obtaining a better job in the future was a major factor in their decision to do so. The fact that their parents wanted them to take French was also reported to be an important reason by a large minority of students.

## Written Tasks

In this section of the chapter, the students' responses to the written tasks are analyzed and discussed. Analysis of the written tasks focused on the following questions:

1. Which topics and questions did students select as being relevant to an understanding of the way of life in Alberta and in Quebec?

2. Were students able to organize general categories and details pertaining to the way of life in Alberta and Quebec so as to suggest a knowledge of differences and similarities between Francophone culture and their own?

3. Based on the students' performance on the written tasks, how might their understanding of culture be described?

Nostrand (1974) argued that through culture study students can gain some understanding of the influences that a culture exerts on the behavior of its carriers. If culture can be seen as a system of action and of cognition determining the way people live, then by bringing together experience of and knowledge about such a system, some measure of understanding can be achieved. He suggested that by starting from the students' interests and by placing what they want to know in the context of a structured system of a culture's themes, students' interest may be sustained, and they may be led towards an "examined experience" not only of the second culture but of their home culture. He also suggested that it is possible to test students' understanding of culture - their ability to use their skill and knowledge - in real or simulated situations.

In this study, students were asked to respond to two simulated situations in order to determine whether they had gained the necessary knowledge and experience to permit such an "examined experience" of two cultures and to determine how they might structure their understanding of "way of life". Although the tasks were similar, they were not identical. The first task called upon the students to organize their experience of life in Alberta into "topics" or themes which they felt would accurately portray life in Alberta. The second task asked the students to write what they felt would be significant questions pertaining to life in Quebec. Although it was theoretically possible to complete the second task in the absence of any concrete knowledge about life in Quebec, it was hoped that the tasks would prompt the students to reflect upon similarities and differences and to come to some realization of their approach to the tasks. In the interviews which followed, the students' reflections on their performance would be used as a point of departure for discussion of their understanding of culture.

In order to analyze data from the written tasks, they were first read and re-read many times, in the hope that common themes would emerge. Performance on Task One

was then analyzed in the following manner. A list of topics was made by copying terms used by the students on their tasks and organizing them in clusters around common ideas. Each cluster was given a number. Each student's written responses were then re-read and each topic given by the student was coded by assigning the number which corresponded to the cluster. It was then possible to "grade" each student's written task by totalling the number of topics he or she had suggested. An additional "mark" was given if the student attempted to compare life in Alberta to life in Quebec by noting similarities or differences pertaining to a particular topic. The following chart indicates the frequency with which topics occurred in students' performances on the first task.

Task One - Table 1

Topics Selected by Students

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Topic —— | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| School system/education | 11 | 55.0 | 17 | 85.0 |
| Language/language learning | 8 | 40.0 | 8 | 40.0 |
| Ethnic and linguistic background of population | 5 | 25.0 | 4 | 20.0 |
| Character of people | 4 | 20.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| Cities | 3 | 15.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| Geography-environment | 4 | 20.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| Weather or climate | 7 | 35.0 | 9 | 45.0 |
| Industry/pollution | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 25.0 |
| Natural resources | 1 | 5.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Agriculture | 4 | 20.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| Food | 4 | 20.0 | 5 | 25.0 |
| Clothing | 4 | 20.0 | 3 | 15.0 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transportation | 2 | 10.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Government and politics | 6 | 30.0 | 5 | 25.0 |
| History | 1 | 5.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Employment | 2 | 10.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Housing | 1 | 5.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Wealth/poverty | 2 | 10.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| System of land division | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Sports teams | 5 | 25.0 | 9 | 45.0 |
| Recreation/outdoor life | 6 | 30.0 | 6 | 30.0 |
| Leisure-time activities | 3 | 15.0 | 10 | 50.0 |
| Major events | 2 | 10.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Cultural events and holidays | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Alberta customs and traditions | 1 | 5.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Tourist attractions | 8 | 40.0 | 6 | 30.0 |
| Everyday life | 5 | 25.0 | 5 | 25.0 |
| Family, friends & neighbourhood | 6 | 30.0 | 8 | 40.0 |

Table 2 provides lists of topics mentioned by one quarter or more of the Grade Six students and Grade Nine students. The two lists are similar to one another and are illustrative of the nature of these students' understanding of "way of life in Alberta" . When asked to provide an outline of topics which would accurately portray life in Alberta, the students more often listed aspects of life which touched directly on their daily lives and which they felt they would be competent to talk about with their peers in Quebec. Each Grade Nine student, on average, listed more topics than did the Grade Six students, and in addition, the Grade Nine students tended to include more detail with each topic than did the Grade Six students. Very few students included detail that suggested they were aware of differences or similarities between the ways of life in Alberta and in

Quebec; similarly, very few indicated that the topics of Similarities or Differences could themselves be used as aspects of their outlines. This suggests that they were not able to grasp an essential aspect of the task, which was that their outline was meant to prepare them to communicate an understanding of their own way of life for a Francophone audience and that points of comparison would be implicit in such a task.

Task One - Table 2

Topics Most Often Mentioned by Students (at least 25%)

| Grade Six | Grade Nine |
|---|---|
| 1. School system/education (55%) | 1. School system/education (85%) |
| 2. Language/language learning (40%) | 2. Leisure-time activities (50%) |
| 3. Tourist attractions (40%) | 3. Sports teams (45%) |
| 4. Weather or climate (35%) | 4. Weather or climate (45%) |
| 5. Government/politics (30%) | 5. Language/language learning (40%) |
| 6. Recreation/outdoor life (30%) | 6. Family, friends and neighbourhood (40%) |
| 7. Family, friends and neighbourhood (30%) | 7. Tourist attractions (30%) |
| 8. Ethnic/linguistic backgrounds (25%) | 8. Recreation/outdoor life (30%) |
| 9. Sports teams (25%) | 9. Everyday life (25%) |
| 10. Everyday life (25%) | 10. Industry/pollution (25%) |
| | 11. Food (25%) |
| | 12. Government/politics (25%) |

The students' performance on Task Two was more difficult to analyze, particularly because so many questions were stated in a general fashion and because the task itself did not require the students to actually demonstrate knowledge of the details that might constitute an answer to the questions. However, the frequency with which

certain kinds of questions appeared did illuminate the principal concerns they felt they should know the answers for in order to demonstrate an understanding of the way of life in Quebec. Wherever possible, questions were coded using the same list of topics which had emerged from Task One, and an additional list of more general questions was also complied.

Task Two - Table 1

Principal Concerns Around Which Students Framed Questions

(Number of Questions in Brackets)

| Grade Six | Grade Nine |
|---|---|
| 1. Language/language learning (24) | 1. Language/language learning (31) |
| 2. School system/education (16) | 2. Leisure-time activities (14) |
| 3. Character of people (15) | 3. Food (13) |
| 4. Weather/climate (8) | 4. Character of people (12) |
| 5. Housing (6) | 5. School system/education (11) |
| 6. Food (5) | 6. Clothing (8) |
| 7. Clothing (5) | 7. Family/friends/neighbourhood (8) |
| 8. Family/friends/neighbourhood (8) | 8. Weather/climate (7) |
| 9. Employment (4) | 9. Everyday life (7) |
| 10. Leisure-time activities (4) | 10. Geography/environment (6) |

A comparison of the topics most often mentioned by students on Task One and the principal concerns around which students framed questions on Task Two revealed many similarities between the two lists. Questions relating to language/language learning and the school system were posed by Grade Six students more often than any other, which paralleled the choice of topics by Grade Six students on Task One. The principal

areas of questioning by Grade Nine students were language/language learning and leisure-time activities, whereas the primary topics selected by Grade Nine students on Task One were school system/education and leisure-time activities. A review of both lists revealed that topics and questions pertaining to the day-to-day lives of young people formed the core of questions about Quebec and topics about Alberta, which indicated that, although the students lacked knowledge of specific similarities and differences between the ways of life in Alberta and Quebec, they selected the same kinds of questions and topics which have been suggested in the literature as suitable starting points for the study of culture by adolescent second language learners (Brooks, 1964, 1968; Chastain, 1976; Nostrand, 1974; Seelye, 1984).

Task Two - Table 2

Number of General Questions and Concerns Posed

| Question | Grade Six | Grade Nine |
|---|---|---|
| What was it like? | 4 | 1 |
| What did you see? | 1 | 1 |
| What did you do/where did you go? | 2 | 5 |
| Where did you stay/who did you stay with? | 3 | 0 |
| Did you have fun? | 6 | 4 |
| What did you like best? | 2 | 0 |
| What do the people look like? | 3 | 3 |
| Did you like it there? | 3 | 0 |
| Is it nicer than here? | 1 | 0 |
| Is it expensive to live there? | 1 | 2 |
| Why did you go? | 1 | 0 |
| How did you get there? | 2 | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Would you want to go there again? | 1 | 2 |
| Are you glad to get back home? | 0 | 1 |
| When are they coming here? | 0 | 2 |
| Did you learn anything new? | 1 | 0 |
| | 31 (22.1% of total questions) | 22 (12.7% of total questions) |

As indicated in Table 2, the Grade Six students asked more questions of a general nature than did the Grade Nine students. The principal general concerns around which the Grade Six students framed their questions included: "Did you have fun?"; What was it like?"; "Who did you stay with?"; "What do the people look like?"; and "Did you like it there?", whereas the principal topics of general questioning by Grade Nine students included: "What did you do?"; "Did you have fun?"; and "What do the people look like?". It is immediately apparent from these kinds of questions that students in both grades posed questions of a somewhat superficial nature which could have been asked of anyone travelling anywhere on a holiday. That is, the questions imply no knowledge whatever of Quebec as a unique destination and do nothing to illuminate an understanding by the student of the way of life in Quebec.

Perhaps in the absence of actual knowledge which might help them to frame specific questions, these students felt that even a general question would be better than no question at all. These questions reveal that students' concerns revolve around the superficialities of travelling as a tourist might, with little contact with the people or with life as it is lived and little understanding of what it might be like to be a stranger among people who feel at home in circumstances quite different from the student's own culture. These students have neither sufficient knowledge about nor experience with Francophone culture to allow one to describe them as culturally aware or sensitive. However, these

questions might well reflect the students' genuine interests and might constitute a starting point for the building of cultural understanding.

## Student Interviews

In this section of the chapter, data from student interviews are analyzed and discussed. Analysis of interview transcripts focused on the five following questions or clusters of questions:

1. What strategies do students use to complete culture-related tasks?
2. What is the perceived relevance of learning about culture in the second language class?
3. What would students identify as topics of interest and preferred activities in culture study?
4. What are students' perceptions of cultural competence (knowledge, behavioral, and affective dimensions), i.e., what do students think they should learn about a culture in order to understand and communicate with people in that culture?
5. How would students describe what it means "to be in a culture"? Are these students "culturally aware"? In other words, does "culture" have any personal relevance for them, or is it something that "other" people have? Have they developed a sense of knowing how to be a "foreigner"?

Discussion of interview data attempts to identify common themes which surfaced repeatedly in interviews with students and to interpret these in the light of the problem of the study.

### The Learning Process: The Interview as a Research Tool

Stern (1983) has indicated that the factors influencing the learning process (social context, learner characteristics, and learning conditions) have been the subject of much

research into language learning, but that the relationship among these variables, as well as the specific contributions of each one to the learning process, are hard to isolate. The learning process remains elusive, and research has only just begun to study it directly; most research into language learning up to now has been referred to as the study of products, using the outcome of learning as a source of inference about the learning process.

Stern has suggested that the learning process can be looked upon "as consisting overtly of strategies and techniques employed by the learner and, covertly, of conscious and unconscious mental operations" (1983, p. 339). A number of approaches to the study of the learning process have been proposed. One approach might be to openly examine the actual language learning behavior of students: What do learners do to learn a language in the classroom or in a free learning situation? Another approach might be to tap the insights of the learners themselves and to inquire into their objectives, strategies, and techniques, their thoughts and feelings about language learning as well as steps and stages perceived by them as necessary to master the language (Cohen & Hosenfeld, 1981; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern & Todesco, 1978).

The interview method has been used productively in this kind of approach. Naiman et al., in their extensive study of the good language learner, found that a classroom observation study at the high school level did not revealed very little about learning strategies but that interviews with the same students were more productive. The great variety of opinions about classroom language learning suggested that the students had distinct likes and dislikes about different classroom activities, and the authors noted that the criticisms of students could be more constructively used if students were induced to reflect about their learning situation so as to identify reasons for their negative or positive reactions towards specific learning tasks and activities (1978, p. 81).

Hosenfeld (1979) argued that a research focus on the teaching process and learning products has yielded disappointing results which have not illuminated the

learning process, since "instead of posing meaningful problems and tailoring the methodology to the problems, an existing methodology appears to be dictating the kinds of research questions that are being asked" (p.51). She proposed that a shift in focus from the teaching process to the learning process involves a shift in research methodology, arguing that interviews in which students "think aloud" about how they performed conventional language learning tasks might yield more insights into the learning process. Further research by Cohen and Hosenfeld (1981) also emphasized the usefulness of thinking aloud (or "introspection") and self-observation (or "retrospection") as research tools in probing how a second language is learned.

## Strategies used by Students to Complete Culture-related Tasks

The students in the study were asked to describe how they went about beginning the written tasks, to describe any difficulties they encountered, and to reflect on the sources they drew on to complete the exercises. In general, the Grade Six students found it easier to write questions about Quebec (Task Two) than to think of topics about Alberta. Although only one student had briefly been in Quebec as a tourist, they were all able to draw on their previous experiences of asking family or friends about their trips. As one student explained:

> Well, I could think better, and I didn't have to think about Alberta, and I could just think, "what would my friends ask me if I went to Quebec?" Because when my friends come back from somewhere, those are some of the questions I ask.

These students found it difficult to complete the first exercise because, as one student put it, "you're not really used to telling about Alberta." They expressed in various ways the necessity of thinking of interesting and important features of life in Alberta. Providing details about Alberta from a comparative point of view was particularly difficult, especially in the absence of a knowledge of life in Quebec. As one student expressed it, he saw his job as thinking "about what's different about Edmonton [compared] to

Quebec", and he had never travelled beyond Alberta and B.C. One student characterized her approach as "brainstorming", but in general, the Grade Six students did not employ a conscious approach to the tasks. It was while retrospecting that they became aware of the strategy they had employed. One exception was a student who explained how her outline unfolded as a chain of interconnected thoughts related to her own life.

An analysis of comments from Grade Nine students revealed that they experienced more difficulty than the Grade Six students, largely because their approach to each task was more sophisticated. Two students who approached the first task from a personal point of view said they found it easy. They knew what life in Alberta was like and simply thought about the kinds of things that kids their age were interested in whereas the questions about Quebec were difficult. As one student said,

> Well, I've never been to Quebec before. And when the people would ask what it was like, I didn't know what to write - my answers - because I didn't know if I was writing down the right stuff or not, so it was mostly guessing.... Did I guess right?

The Grade Nine students recognized the hypothetical nature of the tasks and were more likely to be intolerant of them. One student found the second task difficult. She described asking questions of others about their travel experiences as follows:

> That type of thing doesn't interest me ... I basically take French because ... well, my Mother wanted me to go into it.

This same student also found the first task difficult because she tried to think about similarities and differences between Alberta and Quebec. She explained her problem as follows:

> ...it was the main titles ... the basic different parts of society ..., like what I thought was "What would be different there compared to here?", and because generally there's really not too much difference, except for specific parts, like the culture and maybe even some of the foods and the customs ... I tried to think of what was different, and maybe point out some of the things that are even the same.

Again, this student expressed frustration at her lack of knowledge about Quebec and felt that if she were to complete the tasks from her own experience and point of view, she needed to know more about the way of life in Quebec.

One Grade Nine student approached the outlining task as if it were a "Social Studies report", including topics such as "Climate", "Population", "Industry", and in retrospect said he perhaps should have included more detail from a personal point of view, reflecting his interests in "what the people are like and how they use the language", instead of limiting his choice of topics to "surface things", which he felt were more typical of Social Studies assignments.

In general, most of the students saw no relationship between their approach to either of the tasks and skills or content learned from any other subject area. Their approach might be summarized by one student's comment as follows, "Basically, it just came from out of my head." Two students remarked that Social Studies helped them think of topics for their first tasks but that personal experience was the basis for completing the second. One student observed:

> Social Studies helped a little bit in doing this, in comparing, you know, like the climate and stuff, for comparing. That's basically it.

The fact that so few students felt that skills or content learned in Social Studies might have contributed to their approach to the tasks came as a surprise, since it had been assumed that students might observe some parallels between the tasks and the emphasis placed on presenting a portrait of a way of life, and Social Studies units focusing on culture in the elementary and junior high school curriculum. This finding was also surprising because two of the Grade Six students interviewed were being taught Social Studies in French, but one observed that "mainly, we've just done Government." In addition, the Grade Nine student who saw his first task in the same light as a Social Studies report commented:

> Even that (in Social Studies), I don't think we've really got too much into culture.

These comments on Social Studies suggested that topics with a cultural focus receive insufficient attention in Social Studies classrooms, in spite of considerable emphasis on culture in the Social Studies curriculum (Alberta Social Studies Curriculum, 1981).

## Perceived Relevance of Learning about Culture in the Second Language Class

As noted in the review of literature, the traditional curricular approach to second language teaching and learning has emphasized the mastery of the language divorced from its cultural context. In the last two to three decades, teachers have become more aware of the need to emphasize the cultural context in order to insert meaning into language-in-use, but cultural topics are still often included in the program only where time permits, reflecting the profession's ambivalence towards culture. In the Extended French program at the elementary level, no set percentage of time has been set aside for cultural instruction, whereas at the junior high level, programs are to be based on a 50% language and 50% cultural topics division of time. Students were asked to comment on the amount of time they had spent learning the language itself as compared with the time spent learning about the way French-speaking people live and/or behave. All of the Grade Six students observed that more time was spent on learning the language than on learning how Francophones live and, in general, they felt it should be this way. One student justified his teacher's emphasis on language acquisition as follows:

> Because if you're going somewhere, it doesn't really help that much to know their customs and stuff, but you need the language to get around.

The tendency to see language in isolation from culture surfaced repeatedly in student remarks, as if the language were a valuable and useful skill for one's own use but quite divorced from a community of speakers. A parallel tendency to see Francophones as similar to Anglophones in every respect but language was also apparent. As one student observed:

> I think it's important [to stress] learning the language 'cause in Social Studies we can learn <u>that</u> [how people live], or just reading an encyclopaedia you can learn that, so I think it's more important learning about French. Besides, I'd say they were basically the same as us besides [the fact that] they speak French. There are some snobs, there are some nice people, there are some grumpy people. So they're just the same as us.

The Grade Six students tended to report more positive than negative feelings towards Francophones and to feel that differences between Anglophones and Francophones could be neatly summarized as simply a question of language; at the same time, this simplistic view of the relevance of learning about culture was a reflection of their isolation from a Francophone milieu and their almost total lack of knowledge about Francophone culture.

The Grade Nine students also reported that more than half of their class time was spent learning the language. One student felt that her teacher had spent almost no time at all on culture, whereas another student in the same class assessed the split as "mostly language, but 65/35, I'd say." Evidence of confusion over what exactly constitutes time spent on "the way French-speaking people live" also surfaced in the interviews with the other Grade Nine students. One student observed that about half the time was spent on language and half on "the surface things, like history and geography, but we never really actually studied how people acted or reacted when they use the language." In fact, the Grade Nine students, each in his or her own way, reflected a fairly sophisticated understanding of the relevance of socio-cultural context to language use and of the interdependence of language and culture. One student, who throughout the interview expressed very negative feelings towards taking French and a considerable degree of frustration at her lack of competence after so much time in French classes, nevertheless summarized her defense of a combination of language and culture as follows:

> Well, I would sort of mix it, because you can't have one without the other ... Say you want to go down to Quebec ... you have to know what to say in situations, and what to do also, and you have to know the culture to enjoy the culture too, and without the language you can't enjoy that either.

Each of the Grade Nine students felt that learning the language was an important consideration in terms of his or her own future plans but that time spent on learning about the socio-cultural context was worthwhile. One student expressed the view that:

> ... if you find out more about where the people live then you're learning about French too, like you were learning the same.

The Grade Nine students also tended to be quite curious about the contradiction between the "perfect French" they have learned in school and the colloquialisms used in Quebec. One student felt a knowledge of slang would help her to communicate better with the people of Quebec, if she were to travel there, but that an explanation of the usage must come from the socio-historical background of the people:

> I think there are times when it might be good to know about the people because maybe you can see why they use some of their sayings.

The Grade Nine students, on the whole, perceived a knowledge of the way of life of Francophones to be relevant to their own language acquisition process. Like the Grade Six students, they tended to perceive a mastery of the language as their main purpose but were much less likely than were the Grade Six students to divorce the language from its community of speakers.

## Topics of Interest and Preferred Activities in Culture Study

The literature on culture in the second language curriculum suggests that students can be motivated to learn language if program developers and teachers build on students' curiosity about and interest in the day-to-day lives of the speakers of the language they are learning and that students' interests should be a building block in any language program. The students were asked to give some examples of the activities and projects they had done in class that had helped them to learn about French ways of life. Almost without exception, the students interviewed had trouble remembering anything they had done and displayed a certain lack of interest in discussing the question. One student's remark typifies their response:

> I don't really think we did anything, actually, except a report on France. We had to ...

Another student said:

> In French, you learn about the history and everything, but I'd rather know what they're doing now, like what they learn at school and what they do for their free time, so you can sort of compare what you're doing here to what they're doing.

When asked what kinds of questions or topics they would enjoy finding out more about in French class, every student had a ready response related to his or her own life as it was reflected in the written tasks. One student remarked:

> I would like to know a little more about the kids that live there ... exactly what they do, how their culture affects their daily schedule, little things like the questions here.

Each student responded in a similar fashion, listing topics such as family life, friends, schools, leisure time activities, the people and their day-to-day lives, food, shopping, transportation, customs, and so on. Upon reflection, the students realized that they had enjoyed some classroom activities related to these topics, including performing skits, writing letters, listening to music, watching television, reading books, cooking food, playing games, and so on. Yet, in general, the students' remarks suggested a lack of attention to their interests in the development of programs.

There may be several explanations for this, and discussions with teachers substantiated some of the most significant ones. First, students may not be asked on a regular basis what their interests are, or they may not think that French class is a situation where they might reasonably expect to pursue their interests. Second, teachers may feel ambivalent about teaching a culture which is foreign to them, may lack the personal knowledge so essential to the portrayal of a vital, lived culture, and may lack the kind of contemporary materials which might suit their students' interests. In addition, in the face of a clear mandate to "teach the language" in less time than seems possible, their students' interests in the day-to-day lives of its speakers are neglected. As one teacher put it, "something has to go."

## Students' Perceptions of Cultural Competence

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the second language learner's transition from form to function, that is, from linguistic competence to communicative competence requires a knowledge of cultural norms (Nussenbaum, 1983). The question "What does a language learner need to know to be a competent member of a linguistic community?" implies a consideration of cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions of language. The students in the study were asked what they thought they should know and be able to do in order to communicate with people in Quebec or France.

For these learners, so distant from a society in which French is the language of the majority, such questions can be answered only from a hypothetical point of view. Not only do they lack more than a superficial knowledge of any Francophone society, but in addition, personal experience with such a society is practically nonexistent. The students' responses constituted a reflection of their dilemma as "foreign" language learners but, at the same time, a creativity of thought that might flourish in a more functional setting was evident. When asked what they thought they should know that would help them to communicate with people if they were to go to Quebec or France on an exchange, all of the students responded that they would have to know how to speak better French, and for some, this would include a knowledge of colloquialisms. One Grade Nine student's comment typifies this priority:

> It's important to know just <u>how</u> you would use it. If you knew how other people use the language, <u>you</u> could understand how to use it better, obviously, because you know how to communicate better, and you wouldn't sound ... you wouldn't be using perfect language, perfect French.

The recognition that they would need to know what might be considered appropriate speech and appropriate behavior was evident in other students' comments as well. One Grade Six student observed:

> You should be able to go along with the family rules ... like different rules from maybe what you do, so that you don't get into trouble.

This student wasn't able to specify what kinds of behavior might be different, beyond the general remark:

> Oh, the way they dress, different things that they do, like different games.

This vagueness also typified the Grade Nine responses. One Grade Nine student, who had visited Quebec briefly as a tourist, was nevertheless unable to say what aspects of life might be similar to or different from life in Alberta. However, she felt that a knowledge of everyday life might help her to anticipate the actions of others and provide cues as to what her behavior should be. She remarked:

> Well, I'd like to know some of the stuff that I put down in my outline so you don't just go in there and you're shocked at something they do ... If I knew what they were doing, maybe I could try and fit in a bit more, you know.... Like, if they do something that I think is maybe weird, maybe I could go along with it, and so if I knew that ahead of time, I wouldn't be quite so worried about it when I got there.

Another Grade Nine student said she'd like to learn more "day-to-day things" before a trip to Quebec or France:

> ... like try to learn more things about <u>what</u> to do when I do the day-to-day things.

Again, she was not able to say precisely just what differences she might anticipate, beyond the general observation that "the customs are a little different from here."

In general, the students in both grades felt that life in Quebec or France would be more similar to than different from their lives in Alberta, beyond the obvious difference of language. One Grade Six student's feeling was that:

> ...they'd probably have the same kind of schools as we have but they'd do all their stuff in French like we do all our stuff in English.

Several students felt that Francophones are friendlier, have a closer family life than most Albertans, and would likely "get along better" than Albertans do, but that, as one Grade Six student remarked,"People are people."

These students' perceptions of what might constitute cultural competence were unsophisticated and somewhat superficial, yet they constituted an interesting challenge to second language programs. How can students learn this kind of competence in isolation

from a thriving Francophone society? Without personal experience it is practically impossible to truly know a language, yet is it justifiable and defensible to accept the retreat into linguistic competence when the students realize that this is not sufficient?

## Student Reflections on the Meaning of Culture

According to popular mythology, Canada is a multicultural society, a nation in the making, struggling to define its identity as distinct from others. The current debate over cultural sovereignty is a reflection of this. The Alberta Social Studies curriculum emphasizes cultural issues throughout the elementary and junior high grades. The Alberta Nine-Year French Program Curriculum Guide also espouses the dual goal of cultural awareness coupled with personal development. Have students in the Extended French program developed a sense of what culture is? How might this be characterized? Does it have any personal relevance for them? Edgerton has suggested that we are reluctant to believe that we are all products of a culture because "we want to believe that we are completely free of the sorts of biases that we tend to see in other people" (1980, p. 225) and that we tend to be intolerant of "foreigners" because we lack the experience of being strangers or foreigners ourselves.

The students in the study were asked to reflect on what it might mean to be part of a culture and on whether they thought of themselves as being part of a culture. It should be noted that before this point in the interview with each student, the word "culture" had been avoided as much as possible; terms such "way of life", "the way people live", and so on had been used in its place. Thus, the expectation was not that students be able to define "culture" in any precise terms, nor be immediately comfortable with it, but simply that our discussion might prompt them to reveal some notions of the term. In each interview, it quickly became apparent that the students (with the exception of one Grade Six student) were familiar with the term. One Grade Six student said,"I think of different

people and different lands." Another said that it means,..."that you'd be aware of your background", and another said:

> Well, [it means] do what the culture does and special religions and stuff like that, special ceremonies and holidays, and go along with the rules that your culture has and don't go along with other peoples' rules.

One Grade Six student admitted she couldn't say what it meant, and she very clearly felt uncomfortable during our discussion, whereas the other Grade Six students, although quite vague about what it meant for them personally (for example, one student remarked,"Well, I sort of belong to a culture. My Grandma came from Yugoslavia"), were nonetheless tolerant of the discussion. Only one Grade Six student felt she clearly belonged to a culture but was anxious to minimize any differences:

> Well, I'm Chinese...sometimes I eat different foods than some people, I speak a different language a bit, and generally I'm the same as other people.

She also felt that visiting China or speaking more Chinese might make her more aware of belonging to a culture. In contrast, the other Grade Six students had considerable difficulty imagining experiences or circumstances which might make them more aware of belonging to a culture. In general then, these students, although they might be said to possess a somewhat simplified intellectual understanding of culture as a way of life that marks a distinctive heritage, i.e., customs that define certain groups as different, they were not apparently aware of (or at least could not articulate) the concept of culture as the "Canadian" way of life or as a pervasive world view which determines the patterns of their own thought and action.

The Grade Nine students were able to articulate a variety of viewpoints on the meaning of "being part of a culture". One student remarked:

> I don't think I'm part of a culture. Maybe for some people, it might be important for them to keep their own ways, but I don't know for myself what it would be like ... my family, they're not really heavily into what their beliefs or something might be.

For this student, then, others might be described as belonging to a culture, but it carried no personal relevance. Another Grade Nine student's comments also reflected this

viewpoint. She felt that some of her friends belonged to a culture because they wanted to keep "two different ways of life", one at school and one at home, but when asked if she belonged to a culture, she said:

> Personally, no. It's mostly just Canadian. For me it isn't a culture, it's just a way of life. I don't think of being Canadian as a culture, but I guess it actually is.

When asked to explain what she meant by this, she remarked:

> For other people, they might think it is [a culture] because they don't know this way of life, but for me it isn't because that's the only way of life that I know of, and it's nothing different for me.

This student's remarks revealed the slow evolution of her thought as she reflected on the meaning of culture. She seemed to be struggling with the difficulty of saying anything about something she always took for granted and had not questioned before. She initially did not recognize "Canadian" as a culture but as "just a way of life." When asked what might make her more aware of belonging to a culture, she responded:

> Well, if somebody else came here and I would have to take them around and show them, and I would realize that it's actually quite different from other people's life.

This realization was echoed in another student's comments:

> Just because it's domestic (i.e., Canadian), it's still part of a culture. I mean there are a lot of people who are different from me, and so that makes me different, you know. Because I'm different, I'm part of a culture.

When asked what might make her more aware of belonging to a culture, she responded:

> I'm just English, yeah, English-Canadian.... Nothing has really happened to me [to make me aware] because my culture is so wide, it's so large that I don't, you know ...

She was unable to complete her thought, but it became evident that for this student, we are all products of a culture, even if that realization is purely intellectual. This notion was summed up by one student as follows:

> I guess if you put culture down as the way people do things and the way people act, I guess you could say that we do live in a certain culture.

When asked how he might become more aware of belonging to a culture, this student observed:

> By talking about it, like we are here. I think it's one of those things that kind of gets passed over. I don't think you'd really have any reason to accidentally pick up the idea, unless you're purposely talking about it or something.

For the Grade Nine students, then, discussion of the term "culture" encouraged certain notions to emerge. Their conceptions of culture came not from any personal experience of "strangerness", but perhaps from a growing intellectual capacity to play with ideas. They have not had the kinds of experiences which might enhance cultural awareness. Unlike individuals who grow up with feet in two different cultures, they have not had the kinds of experiences which might reveal to them the assumptions of their previously taken for granted way of life. Their understanding of the role culture plays in the life of the individual may be described as intuitive and fragmentary rather than personal and psychological.

## Summary

This chapter has included a detailed descriptive analysis of the data obtained through the use of the questionnaire, the two written tasks, and the interviews, as well as a discussion of the findings. Chapter V presents a summary of the study, the conclusions based on the findings, implications for education, and some suggestions for further research.

# CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter provides a brief summary of the study as well as a statement of conclusions derived from the findings. In addition, some implications for second language programs are discussed. Finally, some suggestions for further research within the field of culture in the second language curriculum are considered.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of culture as a component of their second language learning experience. Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the linguistic and educational background of students in the Extended French program?
2. Which topics and questions would students select as being relevant to an understanding of the way of life in Alberta and in Quebec? Are they able to organize general categories and details pertaining to the way of life in Alberta and Quebec so as to suggest a knowledge of differences and similarities between Francophone culture and their own?
3. What strategies do students use to complete culture-related tasks?
4. What is the perceived relevance of learning about culture in the second language class?
5. What would students identify as topics of interest and preferred activities in culture study?

6. What are students' perceptions of cultural competence? In other words, what do students think they should learn about a culture in order to understand and communicate with people in that culture?

7. How would students describe what it means "to be in a culture"? Are these students "culturally aware"? That is, does "culture" have any personal relevance for them, or is it something that "other" people have? Have they developed a sense of knowing how to be a "foreigner"?

The sample consisted of 20 Grade Six students and 20 Grade Nine students selected from four Extended French classes within Edmonton Public Schools. A written questionnaire, two open-ended written tasks, and oral interview questions constituted the instruments used in the study. These were designed by the researcher, tested in a pilot study, and subsequently revised. The questionnaire items were designed to obtain information relating to the backgrounds of Extended French students participating in the study. The two written tasks were designed to determine which topics and questions students would select as being relevant to an understanding of the way of life in Alberta and in Quebec and to assess their ability to organize in written form both general categories and particular features of a comparative nature. They were also designed to act as a point of departure for interview sessions. The interview questions were designed to obtain information relating to the five remaining areas of concern listed above.

Each student completed the questionnaire and the two written tasks. A sub-sample of eight students then completed individual audio-taped interviews of approximately 15 - 18 minutes duration. Questionnaire data were analyzed through the use of relative frequencies. The students' performances on the written tasks were analyzed with reference to a composite list of topics and questions compiled, and relevant data were presented in table form and discussed. This analysis was then complemented by a qualitative analysis of their ability to organize in written form both general categories and particular features of a comparative nature. The interview transcripts were analyzed

by comparing the remarks of each student on a particular topic to those of the other students on the same topic. In addition, analysis of the interview data was directed towards identifying common themes which surfaced repeatedly in the interviews and towards interpreting these themes in the light of the problem of the study.

## Conclusions

The conclusions that follow are based on trends that are implicit in the research data. Because of the small size of the sample and because findings are limited by the fact that they are based solely on students' responses to instruments administered by the researcher, generalizations must be made with caution and should not be regarded as irrefutable fact.

1. A majority of Extended French students at the Grade Six and Grade Nine levels are Canadian-born, their mother tongue is English, and they may be described as living in an Anglophone home environment. In addition, most have received their prior schooling in Edmonton. Most students are aware of the reality of other languages in their environment outside of the language classroom, reporting some level of competence in one or more languages other than English and some contact with speakers of languages other than English within their circle of family, friends, and acquaintances. However, most students have never visited a Francophone country or region of Canada, and thus have had no personal experience or prolonged contact with a Francophone milieu. Nevertheless, a majority of students intend to continue with their French studies, largely because they believe there is a relationship between competence in French and future job opportunities.

2. Most students at the Grade Six and Grade Nine levels perceive topics and questions relating directly to their own everyday lives as being most relevant to an understanding of the way of life in Alberta and Quebec. In addition, most students are able to organize, in written form and from a personal point of view, general categories pertaining to the way of life in Alberta and general questions pertaining to life in Quebec. However, most students lack the necessary personal experience and knowledge of the particular features of Francophone culture to enable them to describe in any detail differences and similarities between it and their own culture or to pose questions which suggest more than a superficial knowledge of differences and similarities. Thus, although the list of topics compiled from the students' performance on the written tasks is similar in some respects to the kinds of topics which have been suggested in the literature as being appropriate for young language learners (Brooks, 1964; Nostrand, 1974), it may be concluded that one of the minimum expectations with regard to cultural understanding (i.e., the ability to describe differences and similarities) has been inadequately fulfilled by these students.

3. Students experience a variety of difficulties when completing culture-related tasks and do not, in general, employ a conscious strategy. However, in the absence of personal experience with and specific knowledge of a second culture, most students, in retrospect, feel they rely on guess-work and personal interests and viewpoints to help them complete such tasks. Most students feel they do not rely on skills or content learned from any other subject area, including Social Studies, to complete culture-related tasks.

4. The majority of Grade Six students tend to see language in isolation from culture and tend to feel that learning the language per se should take precedence over learning about the way of life of Francophones. The Grade Nine students perceive a knowledge of the way of life of Francophones to be more relevant to their own language acquisition process. Like the Grade Six students, they tend to perceive a mastery of the language as

their main purpose but are less likely than the Grade Six students to divorce the language from its community of speakers.

5. Students' interests and preferred activities in culture study are varied and may be characterized as relating to the contemporary everyday life of adolescent speakers of the second language. Most students feel that they do not learn about these topics in French class, which suggests a lack of attention to their interests in the development of programs.

6. Students' perceptions of what might constitute cultural competence are unsophisticated and somewhat superficial. Most students, who are isolated from a Francophone milieu and who lack knowledge of the similarities and differences between Francophone culture and their own culture, tend to identify mastery of the language as the key aspect of cultural competence. Yet, in spite of this, some students recognize that a knowledge of the patterns of everyday life might constitute an important guide to action if they were to visit Quebec.

7. The majority of Grade Six students have acquired a basic familiarity with the concept of culture as customs or behaviour that define certain groups as different from themselves, but they do not see themselves as participants in a culture. The notion of culture has little personal relevance for them. Thus, they cannot be said to have achieved an "examined experience" of their own cultural background, nor do they possess sufficient understanding of Francophone culture to enable them to function as "welcome strangers" in that milieu. The Grade Nine students also lack the kinds of personal experience of "strangerness" that might enhance their awareness of the importance of culture in the determination of their own sense of identity. Although they possess the intellectual capacity to grasp the notion that we are all products of culture, they cannot be said to possess "strategic" competence, a knowledge of how to behave as a foreigner.

## Implications

The results of this study have certain implications for second language programs. Because of the limited amount of research that has been conducted with respect to students' perceptions of culture in second language learning, these implications are presented with considerable caution.

As outlined in the review of related literature, as early as 1953, the Modern Language Association suggested that the inclusion of foreign language study in the general education program could be justified on the grounds of the cultural benefits students might realize from language study. The Association suggested three cultural benefits that should be emphasized:

1. Students should gain an understanding of the nature of culture itself.
2. Their cultural bondage should be reduced.
3. They should achieve a fuller understanding of their own cultural background.

In the past three decades, these benefits, in addition to the more specific goal of understanding the culture of the people whose language is being studied, have been repeatedly stressed in the literature on the value of culture study and in statements of rationales and goals in curriculum guides for second language programs (e.g., Nine-Year French Program Curriculum Guide, 1980).

Previous research (Mayor, 1984; Parker, 1975; Tardif, 1978) has shown that the goals for cultural understanding have been poorly implemented in Alberta schools. The findings of the present study lend support to the argument that students are not adequately attaining the goal of cultural understanding and cannot therefore be said to have realized the cultural benefits of language study. Any attempt to answer the question so frequently posed by students, "Why are we learning French?", or the more general question, "Why teach a second language at all?" must come to grips with this basic dilemma. If students in the Extended French program are not fulfilling the minimum expectations for cultural

understanding as stated in the curriculum guide, then more attention should be devoted to an examination of the statement of the rationale and goals for cultural understanding and the reasons for their inclusion in the curriculum. Answers must be sought to the questions of what we expect to achieve through culture study and whether our expectations are achievable within the framework of current conceptions of the relationship between language and culture. If the curriculum-as-plan is not being implemented by second language teachers, then more thought must be given to the reasons why this is so, and a decision must be made as to whether the goal of cultural understanding within second language programs is to be taken seriously or abandoned. If this goal is to continue to provide the foundation of the justification for language study, then much more effort should be given to developing a curriculum within which cultural benefits of language study can be realistically achieved by students. In order to develop such a curriculum, several steps should be taken.

1. More consideration should be given to the background and interests which students bring with them to the classroom. The findings of this study suggest that, if we expect students to achieve some measure of cultural understanding, programs must begin by focusing on adolescents in their own everyday situations with interests and concerns similar to those of our students.

2. More attention should be given to the strategies students employ when performing culture-related tasks. This might be accomplished by asking them to "think out loud" as they perform tasks, by asking them to keep journals with their own observations of their performance, or by having them retell in retrospect what they did in order to complete a task. An examination of student strategies may give us important clues as to the skills students need to develop to become culturally competent.

3. More effort should be devoted to exploring the possibilities for interdisciplinary co-operation between second language study and Social Studies. The findings of this study suggest that few students felt they used skills or content learned in Social Studies to

complete tasks, which implies a need for more concerted efforts of both disciplines to achieve parallel goals. Perhaps together they might accomplish goals which neither is achieving well alone.

4. The results of this study indicated that students tend to value acquisition of French more than learning about the way of life of Francophones. The tendencies to conceive of language in isolation from its cultural context and to value mastery of the language per se are perhaps consistent with teachers' conceptions of the relationship between language and culture and are likely a reflection of the students' isolation from a community of native speakers and of their instrumental orientation towards language learning. More attention should be devoted to familiarizing teachers with a language-in-culture perspective and with the means by which they might guide their students towards a kind of cultural literacy. The goal of cultural understanding must be clarified. Teachers need to know what exactly they might be doing to accomplish this goal. Opportunities for contact with communities of native speakers should be made available to both teachers and students. Teacher training and professional development should include much more emphasis on gaining a familiarity with alternatives for a communicative approach within a culture-based curriculum in which culture becomes the "driver" of the culture/language program. Courses, workshops, conferences, and even immersion weekends could include a focus on developing and implementing methods and materials devoted to cultural themes. If students are to become culturally aware or culturally literate, then much more effort should be devoted to preparing teachers to accomplish this goal and to removing the very real constraints that in the past have made it secondary in importance to the achievement of linguistic goals. If "culture" has been conceived of as something to be added on to the regular program where time permits, it is not surprising that students' understanding of culture is superficial and inadequate, nor that they have failed to gain a basic familiarity with the similarities and differences between Francophone culture and their own.

5. The results of this study indicate that the notion of culture carries little personal relevance for students in Extended French programs, in spite of some contact with speakers of languages other than English and a general intellectual awareness that other people's way of life may be different from their own. This suggests that students should be given the opportunity to communicate with Francophones in culturally authentic situations in order that they may better understand their own background. As Seelye has said:

> Just as a fish never discovers water as long as it remains immersed, so it is that only when we are called upon to function in another culture are our basic assumptions revealed. Until an alternate is known, the medium of life is an unexamined given (1984, p. 217).

Students should be given the opportunity to attempt to function as "welcome strangers" in a cultural milieu which is different from their own. In spite of the fact that these students are removed from an environment in which French is the language of the majority, there are nevertheless many possibilities for contact with Francophones in Alberta and teachers must take advantage of these to provide for authentic communicative contexts.

If students continue to learn a hollow form of the language, i.e., language simply as code in isolation from its sociocultural context, then they will not come to know language-in-culture as a "scheme of interpretation and expression" (Schutz, 1971), the way in which we learn to make sense of experience and to represent it to ourselves and to other people. However, if it is determined that a reorientation of the curriculum towards a language-in-culture perspective is not called for, then there can be little justification for claiming that cultural benefits can be realized by students through language study or for including the goals of cultural understanding or cultural sensitivity and personal development in the curriculum.

## Suggestions for Further Research

The present study may be seen as an exploratory investigation of students' understanding of culture as an aspect of their second language learning experience. The small amount of research that has been done in this area suggests that this may be a fruitful area for further research. Specific areas of possible future research studies are mentioned below.

1. Many aspects of the way in which students learn are hidden from sight in the routines of classroom teaching. A study could be undertaken to examine students' strategies as they undertake various culture-related tasks in an attempt to understand the retrospective insights of language learners and thus, to discover more about the learning process.
2. The present study could be replicated with students in Extended French and FSL programs at the Junior High level as well as FSL programs at the Senior High level in order to determine whether the time designated to the teaching of cultural topics in Extended French results in different perceptions of culture between two or more groups.
3. The present study could be replicated with groups of language students and students who have not studied a language in order to determine their understandings of culture.
4. A longitudinal study could be undertaken with one group of language learners in order to determine the development of their "cultural awareness" through several years of language study.
5. A comparative study of language students in French courses and in other language courses such as German could be undertaken to determine the different perceptions of culture.
6. A comparative study of students from an Anglophone home background and students who grow up "with their feet in two cultures" could be undertaken in order to assess their understanding of culture.

7. There is a very real need for research into standards for the achievement of cultural competence and for realistic means of evaluating students' proficiency in this area. The present study constitutes a rudimentary attempt to use culture-related tasks to assess students' cultural understanding. Other means of testing students' competence could be researched.

8. The present study did not use observation of classroom procedures or teaching techniques as a research tool, i.e., the "black box" was not penetrated. Observation of classroom practices could yield valuable insights into the reasons why second language students have not adequately achieved cultural goals.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Nostrand (1974) organized a comprehensive list of cultural themes around four subsystems, culture, society, ecology, and individual in such a way as to provide categories for a comprehensive study of a culture.

2. Since questionnaire items 6 and 7 asked students which languages they understood and spoke without being specific as to levels of competence in these languages, the students may have tended to claim greater language competence than was actually the case.

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# APPENDIX I

# PILOT PROJECT

# MATERIALS

PILOT PROJECT

LETTER OF CONSENT

April 13, 1984

Dear Parent:

Your son/daughter has been asked to participate in a pilot study to be conducted on Tuesday, April 17. The study, which is being undertaken as part of my Master's thesis in the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, involves an examination of culture-related learning in second language classrooms. Each student participant will be asked to complete a short task of approximately one-half hour's duration regarding knowledge of the concept of culture. Following completion of the task, each student will be asked to give his/her observations or opinions on the degree of difficulty s/he experienced in completing the task.

If you have any objections to your child's participation in this pilot study, please inform his/her teacher before Tuesday, April 17.

Thank you.

Mrs. Mary Wagner

# PILOT PROJECT INSTRUMENTS

## A. Short Oral Questionnaire

1. Are you now enrolled in French?
2. Have you ever taken French in school? If so, where and when? For how long? Was your teacher a native speaker of French?
3. Have you ever lived in or travelled in Quebec or any other French speaking country? If so, when? For how long?
4. Is any language other than English spoken in your home? If so, which one? Can you understand, speak, read or write any language besides English?
5. Which textbook series do you use in your French class?

## B. Culture Tasks One and Two: Instructions

I am going to give you instructions for two activities. The purpose of these activities is not to test your knowledge but rather to find out how you would go about completing the activity, and to find out whether you think the activities are hard or easy to do. Please read the first one carefully, and tell me if you understand what to do, or if anything in the instructions is confusing. Then begin to tell me how you would complete the activity. You may do this out loud if you wish. After we have discussed the first activity, we will do the same with the second activity. Remember this is not a test, and will not in any way affect your mark in any of your courses.

Task One

Imagine that you are visiting Quebec City on a two week student exchange trip and are staying at the home of Jacques and Suzanne. They have asked you to come to their school and talk to their class about life in Alberta. Make a list of the topics you will use to help you to organize your presentation. Then under each topic heading, list some examples of the things you will mention about the way people here live.

Topic A

Topic B

Topic C

Topic D

Topic E

Topic F

Topic G

Task Two

Now try to imagine that you have returned home after your two-week visit to Quebec. Your class would like you to write a short article for the school paper about the way people in Quebec live. Try to use the same topic headings as you used in the first task, but this time list as many things as you can think of to help your class understand what it is like to live in Quebec.

Topic A

Topic B

Topic C

Topic D

Topic E

Topic F

Topic G

C. Short Oral Interview after Completion of Culture Tasks

1. Did you find these exercises hard or easy to complete?
2. Can you think of any reasons why they were easy or difficult?
3. Has any one of your school subjects been of some help to you in completing these exercises? If so, which one(s)?
4. Has anything you have read in magazines, newspapers or books helped you? Anything you have watched on T.V.?
5. If you wanted to make sure that the picture you outlined in either activity is accurate or true, can you think of ways you might go about checking it?
6. What kinds of things from your outline would you be most interested in finding out more about in your French class? Can you think of any topics about the way people in Quebec or France live that you didn't include in your outline?

# APPENDIX II

# RESEARCH STUDY

# MATERIALS

# LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your son/daughter has been asked to participate in a research project regarding student perceptions of culture-related learning in the second language classroom. The study, which has been approved by the Edmonton Public School Board, is being undertaken as part of my Master of Education thesis. Each student participant will be asked to complete a short background information questionnaire and will then complete two short written tasks of approximately 20 minutes duration. Individual short interviews will be conducted with some students following completion of these tasks.

If you have any objection to your child's participation in this study, would you kindly inform his/her French teacher before ____(date)____.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Mary Wagner
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta

## RESEARCH STUDY

## INSTRUMENTS

To the Student:

You are participating in a research study which will form the basis of a thesis for a Master of Education degree. I would therefore ask for your cooperation in completing the questionnaire and the two short exercises following it as carefully and as honestly as possible. They are designed to find out more about what you as students think about certain aspects of your French course.

This survey is NOT a test and the answers you give will not affect your mark in any of your subjects.

You need not put your name on the questionnaire or on either of the exercises that follow it.

Thank you very much for taking part in this study.

Part A

## Student Background Information Questionnaire

Directions: Please read each question carefully. Then choose the best answer and circle the letter next to it, or print your answer on the line provided.

1. Are you male or female?
   a. male
   b. female
2. Which grade are you in?
   a. six
   b. seven
   c. eight
   d. nine
   e. ten
3. What is your date of birth? day_____ month_____ year_____
4. Where were you born? city or town _____ province_____
5. Which language is spoken in your home more than any other?
   a. English
   b. French
   c. German
   d. Ukrainian
   e. other

If you circled 'e', please print the name of the language _____

6. Which language(s) do you understand?
   a. English
   b. French
   c. German
   d. Ukrainian
   e. other

If you circled 'e', please print the name of the language _____

7. Which language(s) do you speak?

a. English
b. French
c. German
d. Ukrainian
e. other

If you circled 'e', please print the name of the language _____

8. Which language did you learn first as a child?

a. English
b. French
c. German
d. Ukrainian
e. other

If you circled 'e', please print the name of the language _____

9. Do you personally know anyone (other than your French teacher) who can speak a language other than English?

a. yes
b. no

If 'yes', go on to Question 10.

If 'no', go on to Question 11.

10. If you know a person who speaks a language other than English, how would you describe him/her? Circle all the ones that apply to you.

a. friend
b. neighbour
c. parent
d. grandparent
e. aunt, uncle, cousin
f. other

11. How long have you lived in Edmonton?

a. less than one year
b. one to two years
c. two to five years
d. five to nine years
e. 10 or more years

12. If you have ever lived outside of Edmonton, indicate where.

a. another area of Alberta
b. B.C., Saskatchewan or Manitoba
c. Ontario or Maritimes
d. Quebec
e. elsewhere

13. How much time have you spent visiting an area of Canada or another country where most people speak French in their daily lives?

a. no time at all
b. up to two weeks
c. two to four weeks
d. one to two months
e. more than two months

14. Please place a check mark beside the grade(s) during which you took French. Check all the ones which apply to you.

____ Grade Four
____ Grade Five
____ Grade Six
____ Grade Seven
____ Grade Eight
____ Grade Nine

15. In my experience, I would describe French as:

a. my most difficult subject

b. more difficult than most subjects

c. about the same as my other subjects

d. easier than most subjects

e. my easiest subject

16. In my experience, I would describe French as:

a. my most interesting subject

b. more interesting than most subjects

c. about the same as my other subjects

d. less interesting than most subjects

e. my least interesting subject

17. Do you plan to take French next year? a. yes

b. no

If 'yes', go on to Question 18.

If 'no', go on to Question 19.

18. The main reason why I'm planning to take French next year is:

a. My parents want me to.

b. Most of my friends are going to.

c. I think it will help me to get a better job in the future.

d. I would like to travel and make friends with French-speaking people.

e. other reasons.

If you circled 'e', print your answer on the line provided.

_____

19. The main reason why I'm planning <u>not</u> to take French next year is:

a. My parents think other subjects are more important than French.

b. Most of my friends plan to drop it.

c. I don't like French.

d. I don't think I'll need it in my future.

e. other reasons.

If you circled 'e', print your answer on the line provided.

_____

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE - THANK YOU!

Part B

Task One

Read the directions carefully, and then try your best to complete the following exercise. Remember: this is not a test.

Imagine that you are visiting Quebec City on a two week student exchange trip and are staying at the home of Jacques and Suzanne. They have asked you to come to their school and talk to their class about life in Alberta. Make a list below of the topic headings you will use to help you to organize your presentation. Then under each topic heading, list some examples of the things you will mention about the way people here live. Try to make your answers as complete as possible so that your outline will give an accurate picture of life in Alberta.

Topic A:

Topic B:

Topic C:

Topic D:

Topic E:

Topic F:

Topic G:

## Task Two

Read the directions carefully, and then try your best to complete the following exercise. Remember: this is not a test.

Now try to imagine that you have returned home after your two week visit to Quebec. Your friends and classmates want to know what it is like to live in Quebec and ask you all kinds of questions about the people and their way of life. Make a list of the questions you imagine they would ask. Write as many questions as you can, particularly ones that you think are important to know the answers for in order to have an understanding of the way of life in Quebec.

Question 1:

Question 2:

Question 3:

Question 4:

Question 5:

Question 6:

Question 7:

Question 8:

Question 9:

Question 10:

Part C Student Interviews

Guiding Questions

1. Did you find these exercises hard or easy to complete? Which one was easier than the other?
2. Can you think of any reasons why they were easy or difficult for you?
3. Can you describe how you went about completing the exercises? What did you think of first? What steps did you take to begin your outline?
4. Has any one of your school subjects been of some help to you in completing these exercises? If so, which one(s)? In what way did you think this subject(s) has helped you?
5. If you wanted to make sure that the picture you outlined in either exercise was an accurate one (true to life), can you think of ways you might go about checking it?
6. What kinds of things from your outline would you be most interested in finding out more about in your French class?
7. Can you think of any topics about the way people in Quebec or France live that you didn't include in your outline, but which you would add now? Would you like to learn more about any of these in your French class?
8. While you've been studying French would you say you've spent more time on the language itself or on the way French-speaking people live?
9. In your French class, do you feel it is important to learn about the way French-speaking people live or would you rather stress being able to use the language? Why?
10. What kinds of topics related to the way French-speaking people live or French culture have you learned about in French class?
11. Can you give some examples of the activities or projects you've done that helped you to learn about French ways of life? Which ones did you enjoy?

12. Have you ever read a book, a newspaper or a magazine in French? Did you do this because you wanted to or because your teacher asked you to?

13. Do you ever watch French television? Which programs do you like? Have you ever gone to see a play in French? Did you enjoy it?

14. Have you ever had a French pen-pal?

15. Has a friend of yours or anyone closely related to you been to France or Quebec on a student exchange? What kinds of things seem to stick out in your mind from what they told you about it?

16. If you were to go on an exchange to Quebec or to France:

a) What kinds of things do you think you should know before you go that would help you to communicate with people there?

b) What kinds of things do you think you should be able to do in order to get along with people there?

c) What kinds of things do you think would be different from your life here?

d) What kinds of things do you think would be similar to your life here?

17. Would you say that learning about the way of life in France or Quebec has changed your feelings towards French-speaking people? In what way?

18. If someone used the expression "I think it is important to be part of a culture, to belong to a culture, to be in a culture", what would it mean to you? Are you part of a culture? Can you give it a name? Do you think it's important to be aware of your culture? Can you think of any situations or experiences that might make people more aware of being part of a culture?

# APPENDIX III

## TABLES

Table 1

Sex of Students

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Male | 10 | 50.0 | 7 | 35.0 |
| Female | 10 | 50.0 | 13 | 65.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 2

Grade of Students

| | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Grade Six | 20 | 50.0 |
| Grade Nine | 20 | 50.0 |
| Totals | 40 | 100.0 |

Table 3

Age of Students at Time of Research

| Grade Six | | | Grade Nine | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | Number | Percent | Age | Number | Percent |
| 11 | 15 | 75.0 | 14 | 12 | 60.0 |
| 12 | 5 | 25.0 | 15 | 8 | 40.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 4

Students' Place of Birth

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Edmonton | 10 | 50.0 | 13 | 65.0 |
| Elsewhere in Alberta | 3 | 15.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Elsewhere in Canada except Quebec | 5 | 25.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| Quebec | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Outside Canada | 2 | 10.0 | 4 | 20.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 5

Language Spoken in Home More Often Than Any Other

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| English | 20 | 100.0 | 17 | 85.0 |
| French | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| German | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Ukrainian | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Other | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 6

Languages Understood by Students

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| English only | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 10.0 |
| English and French | 13 | 65.0 | 12 | 60.0 |
| English, French and German | 1 | 5.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| English, French, German & one other | 2 | 10.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| English & one other | 2 | 10.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| English, French and one other | 2 | 10.0 | 6 | 30.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 7

Languages Spoken by Students

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| English only | 5 | 25.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| English and French | 9 | 45.0 | 12 | 60.0 |
| English, French and German | 1 | 5.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| English, French, German & one other | 1 | 5.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| English & one other | 3 | 15.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| English, French and one other | 1 | 5.0 | 5 | 25.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 8

Language First Learned as a Child

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| English | 18 | 90.0 | 17 | 85.0 |
| French | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| German | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Ukrainian | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Other | 2 | 10.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 9

Students' Contact with Speakers of Languages other than English

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Yes | 18 | 90.0 | 19 | 95.0 |
| No | 2 | 10.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 10

Relationship of Students to Speakers of Other Languages

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent* | Number | Percent* |
| Parent and/or Grandparent | 15 | 75.0 | 13 | 65.0 |
| Other family member | 9 | 45.0 | 10 | 50.0 |
| Friend or neighbour | 10 | 50.0 | 14 | 70.0 |
| Other | 5 | 25.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| No response | 2 | 10.0 | 1 | 5.0 |

*Note: Where percentages total more than 100.0, more than one answer was possible.

Table 11

Duration of Students' Residence in Edmonton

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Less than one year | 1 | 5.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| One to two years | 1 | 5.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Two to five years | 3 | 15.0 | 2 | 10.0 |
| Five to nine years | 4 | 20.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| Ten or more years | 11 | 55.0 | 14 | 70.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 12

Place of Students' Residence Outside Edmonton

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Another area of Alberta | 1 | 5.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| B.C., Sask., or Manitoba | 5 | 25.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Ontario or Maritimes | 2 | 10.0 | 3 | 15.0 |
| Quebec | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Elsewhere | 3 | 15.0 | 4 | 20.0 |
| Ontario or Maritimes and Elsewhere | 1 | 5.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| No response | 8 | 40.0 | 11 | 55.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 13

Duration of Students' Visit to Francophone Country or Region of Canada

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| No time at all | 15 | 75.0 | 9 | 45.0 |
| Up to two weeks | 4 | 20.0 | 5 | 25.0 |
| Two to four weeks | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| One to two months | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| More than two months | 1 | 5.0 | 4 | 20.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 14

Grades in Which Students Enrolled in French

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Grades 4, 5, 6 | 18 | 90.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Grades 5, 6 | 2 | 10.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 | 0 | 0.0 | 18 | 90.0 |
| Grades 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 10.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 15

Students' Attitudes Towards French Course: Degree of Difficulty

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Most difficult subject | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| More difficult than most subjects | 2 | 10.0 | 7 | 35.0 |
| About the same as other subjects | 13 | 65.0 | 6 | 30.0 |
| Easier than most subjects | 4 | 20.0 | 5 | 25.0 |
| Easiest subject | 1 | 5.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 16

Students' Attitudes Towards French Course: Degree of Interest

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Most interesting subject | 1 | 5.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| More interesting than most subjects | 5 | 25.0 | 5 | 25.0 |
| About the same as other subjects | 9 | 45.0 | 13 | 65.0 |
| Less interesting than other subjects | 3 | 15.0 | 2 | 10.0 |
| Least interesting subject | 2 | 10.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 17

Students' Intentions to Enroll in French Course

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Plan to enroll | 20 | 100.0 | 19 | 95.0 |
| Plan to discontinue | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Totals | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 18

Reasons for Students' Intention to Continue French

| | Grade Six | | Grade Nine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent* | Number | Percent* |
| My parents want me to | 5 | 25.0 | 6 | 30.0 |
| Most of my friends plan to | 1 | 5.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Better job in future | 17 | 85.0 | 15 | 75.0 |
| Would like to travel and meet francophones | 4 | 20.0 | 4 | 20.0 |
| Other reasons | 4 | 20.0 | 2 | 10.0 |
| Non-response | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 5.0 |

*Note: Where percentages total more than 100.0, more than one answer was possible.